

AFTER THE BATTLE



Number 85

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50 YEARS AGO

The Battle for Merksem

Front Cover: In August 1993, a burial party from the Queen's Colour Squadron of the RAF flew to Murmansk in northern Russia to participate at the burial of the crew of a Hampden shot down in the Soviet Union in 1942 and recovered in 1991 (see page 25).

Centre Pages: On June 3, 1994, at the conclusion of a commemoration ceremony in London's Grosvenor Square — designated two months earlier as the new D-Day Garden of Remembrance — a reproduction of General Eisenhower's office flag is paraded beside his statue in a moment of quiet reflection.

Rear Cover: On June 18, 1994, in a parade to mark the final withdrawal of Allied forces from Berlin, a token force of American, British and French troops marched out along the Strasse des 17. Juni (former East-West Axis). Russian troops held their own separate parade a week later (see page 19). (DPA)

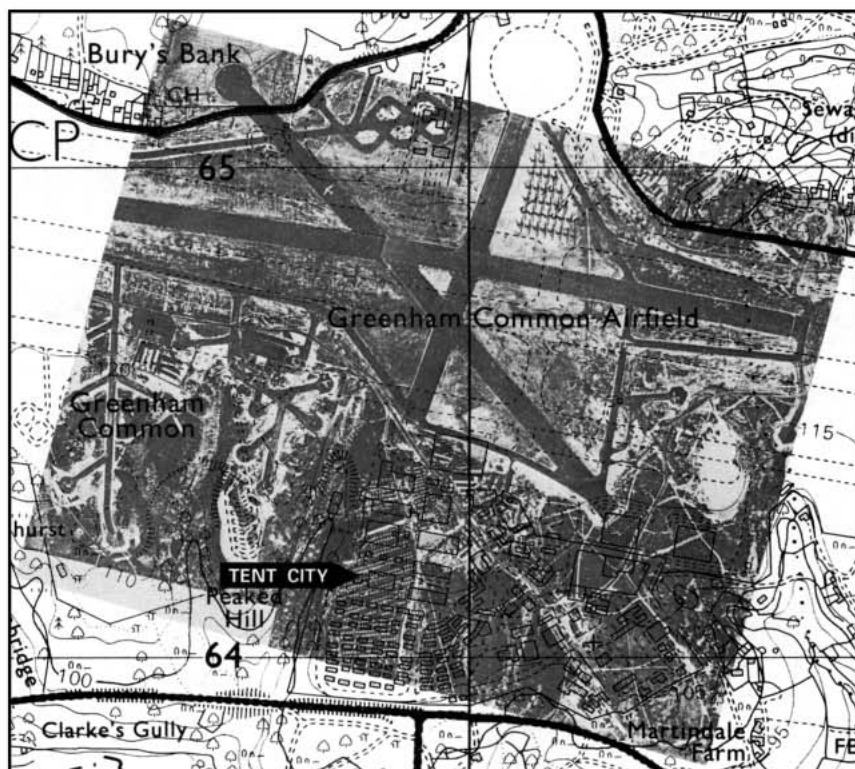
Photo Credits: AP — Associated Press; ANP — ANP Foto, Amsterdam; DPA — Deutsche Presse Agentur, Frankfurt; S&G — Sport and General.



D-1, 1944, Eisenhower surrounded by paratroops of the 101st at Greenham Common.

On the afternoon of Sunday, June 5, 1994, I broke away from watching the live televised coverage from Normandy to undertake the last of the pre-D-Day photography for our current project, *D-Day Then and Now*. Fifty years earlier, General Eisenhower had set out just after 6 p.m. from his 'Sharpener' command post at Portsmouth to wish good luck to the men of the US 101st Airborne Division on their airfields near Newbury, Berkshire. The pictures taken at the time of the blacked-up paratroops crowding around the General as he walked between the rows of tents are now all too familiar, particularly the shot of Eisenhower talking to Lieutenant Wally Strobel of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. Now, it was our intention to return to the same spot and recreate the scene at the exact time with the help of members of the Ridgeway Military and Aviation Research Group.

Until a week before our visit, the exact location of the 'tent city' at Greenham was unconfirmed, most veterans recalling that it lay to the east of the airfield. The only way to be certain was to check aerial pictures taken at the time but, because Greenham Common is still on the restricted list due to its recent use as a US cruise missile base, it took us three months to persuade the Ministry of Defence to allow us access to wartime photography. The tents showed up clearly but, as the base is now twice its original size with very little of the wartime airfield surviving (even the massive main runway was reconstructed on a different alignment), one could not reliably pinpoint their position on the ground. We therefore had to resort to our usual method of resolving such problems: that of making a film overlay to the same scale so that the new layout could be superimposed on the old.





Chairman Bill King had already researched Eisenhower's route and worked out that he would have arrived at the first airfield, Greenham Common, some time after 7 p.m. Double British Summer Time (i.e. GMT or 'Zebra' time plus 2 hours) which had come into force in 1944 on April 2. Thus, as Britain now only advances her clocks by one hour during the summer, we had to be on station at 6 p.m.

Bill, dressed as a 101st paratrooper right down to the 'No. 23' stick label around his neck, arrived in his Jeep exactly on time, driven by his wife, Flora, as an excellent Kay Summersby. Post-war buildings now extend right across the area where the tents had been pitched in 1944 but, fortunately, as the base is no longer active since the missiles were withdrawn from Greenham in 1992, we were allowed to wander at will to locate the correct spot.

Bill King's records indicate that Eisenhower visited *four* out of the five airfields which were the departure points for the 101st. After leaving Greenham, he went on to Aldermaston, Membury and Welford where he bade farewell to the divisional commander, General Maxwell Taylor. Eisenhower probably meant to go to the fifth airfield at Ramsbury but by then he was running short of time, so he returned straight to Greenham (which was the headquarters base of the 101st) to catch the take-off. Kay Summersby, who was Eisenhower's driver that evening, compresses these events in her account and gives the impression that the 101st's commanding officer left from Greenham, which was not the case. Eisenhower then returned to 'Sharpener' which he reached around 1.15 a.m. on June 6.

From the Editor . . .



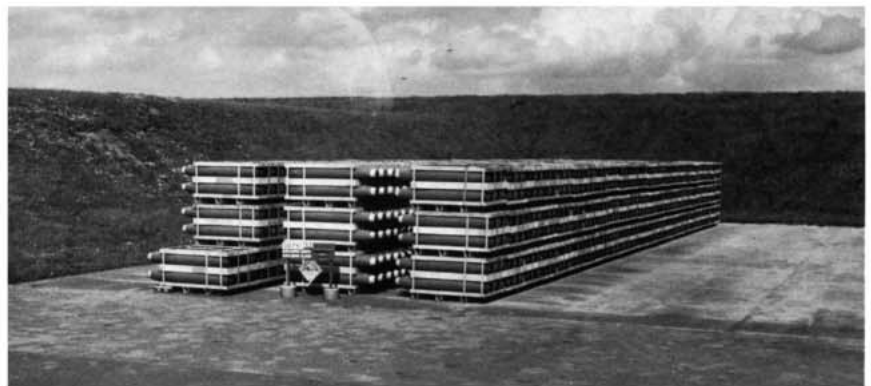
D-1, 1994. Bill King stands in for Lieutenant Wallace Strobel at exactly the same time and place, 50 years on. Security guard Mel Field sportingly agreed to play the part of the Supreme Commander.



Fifty years later, all of us must have been impressed with the scope and presentation of the commemorative events staged to mark the anniversary. Brigadier Tom Longford and the MoD team in London, and General Claude Kicklighter and his committee in Washington, masterminded the operation, complicated as it was by the security measures necessary to protect the heads of state. Both the Portsmouth and Normandy areas were declared air exclusion zones, the accompanying notices to airmen running to more than 20 pages, and it was reported that any aircraft straying into the zones would be forced down.

Tight security is now part and parcel of modern day life and such restrictions increasingly affect *After the Battle* as so many of our photographs have to be taken in or near military installations. However, the anniversary had its compensations. Where last year we were refused permission to take pictures at RAF Welford for *UK Airfields of the Ninth*, as it is now a huge USAF bomb store, this June we were able to tour the base with members of the 101st Airborne with no restrictions at all on photography!

George Koskimaki, General Maxwell Taylor's radio operator and author of *D-Day with the Screaming Eagles* and *Hell's Highway*, returns to Welford for the first time since 1944. Above left: Talking to the joint RAF/USAF base commanders of what is now a massive aviation ordnance depôt. Above right: Twenty years ago, we took George to Normandy (see issue 5); now it was an honour to be able to drive him out onto the airfield from where he had left, even though it now looks nothing like it did with its surface covered in bomb revetments (below). George has just completed the third book in his 101st trilogy: *The Battered Bastards of Bastogne*.

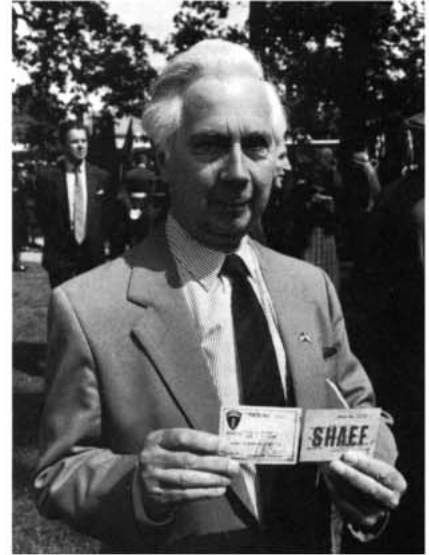


ACM SIR ARTHUR HARRIS	LT. GEN. ISMAY	FIELD MARSHAL SIR ALAN BROOKE	MARSHAL OF THE RAF SIR CHARLES PORTAL	ADMIRAL STARK	FIRST SEA LORD	PRIME MINISTER	SUPREME COMMANDER	DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER	FIELD MARSHAL SMUTS	ADMIRAL RAMSAY	GENERAL MONTGOMERY	ACM SIR T. LEIGH- MALLORY	ADMIRAL CREASY	LT. GEN. GALE	LT. GEN. BRERETON	MAJOR GEN. DE GUINGAND
LT. GEN. GRASETT	ACM SIR SHOLTO DOUGLAS	GEN. SIR H.E. FRANKLYN	LT. GEN. SPAATZ	LT. GEN. PATTON	ADMIRAL KIRK	LT. GEN. BRADLEY	LT. GEN. SMITH	LT. GEN. DEMPSEY	LT. GEN. J.C.H.LEE	LT. GEN. CRERAR	AVM WIGGLES WORTH	LT. GEN. DOOLITTLE	ADMIRAL VIAN	AM SIR A. CONNINGHAM	LT. GEN. MORGAN	AVM ROBB

Whatever the security implications were for the 1994 national commemorations, they pale into insignificance when one considers the seating plan for just the front two rows at the pre-D-Day briefing held at St Paul's School on May 15, 1944, attended by every single commander involved with 'Overlord'. In 1994, the media totally ignored the vital part played by the former 21st Army Group headquarters in reworking the 'Overlord' plans in January 1944. On Sunday, May 15, 1994, we revisited the site of the school, devoid of any memorial save for an old EWS sign on the gateway.

Back in 1944, one of the greatest security risks came on May 15 when all the 'Overlord' commanders assembled together with their chiefs-of-staff at the 21st Army Group HQ for a final briefing. King George VI and the Prime Minister were also present and one bomb could have wiped out the entire Allied leadership. We discovered this seating plan when carrying out research at St Paul's School, Barnes, the old building at Hammer-smith having been demolished in 1970. Although there is no memorial or marker to record its use as Montgomery's HQ for 'Overlord', an Emergency Water Supply inscription still remains clearly painted on the original gatepost.





Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force back in business in May 1994 when a new 'SHAEF Gate' was cut through the brick wall bordering Sandy Lane, Teddington, which had sealed up the old main entrance since the 1960s.

Left: Dressed for the period, 'MPs' checked in the first visitors, the 'Forties dance group The GI Jitterbugs. Right: After the Battle reader Alan Potts — a real ex-SHAEF veteran (he worked in the drawing office) — used his original pass to get inside!

Eisenhower's headquarters in Bushy Park were very nicely remembered on May 30 when the American Ambassador, Admiral William Crowe, unveiled a plaque mounted

on the paved area which now marks the exact site of the Supreme Commander's office (see issue 84). Unfortunately, the SHAEF flag used at the ceremony, reported

to be the original which had hung in Eisenhower's office, turned out to be a reproduction, the real one having been pinched from his HQ at Frankfurt in 1945.



Left: The SHAEF flag is raised once again in Bushy Park at the ceremony of dedication of the paved square which now marks the exact site of Eisenhower's office. Right: The US Ambassador to Britain, Admiral William Crowe, who served President

Eisenhower as his naval aide during the 1950s, gave his address from 'the office' — a nice link with the past as a previous naval aide, Commander Harry Butcher, would undoubtedly have stood on the self-same spot in 1944.



After the ceremonial was over, the jitterbugging began, watched by an enthusiastic, if nostalgic, audience.

The RAF's No. 4 Beach Squadron landed on Jig Red Beach in Gold Sector on D-Day to prepare forward stores depôts so that they would be ready for use when the beach-head airstrips had been constructed. Ron Plater presented a plaque recording the RAF presence in Normandy to Catherine Petit who now owns the building, No. 5, Route de Bayeux, St Côme-de-Fresné, which was then the squadron's headquarters.

In the last few years, new memorials have multiplied in Normandy as each unit strives to have its contribution marked. Ronald Plater wrote from Ryde in the Isle of Wight in August 1993 to tell me of a commemorative plaque he had arranged to be affixed to the headquarters of No. 4 Beach Squadron, 108 Beach Flight, at No. 5 Route de Bayeux at St Côme-de-Fresné. The dedication on June 12, 1993, was the culmination of a nine-year project, begun when Ron rediscovered his former billet in Normandy at the time of the 40th anniversary. 'I never dreamed in those distant days of 1944 that, exactly 49 years later, I would be staying in the self-same billet, sleeping under the same roof.'



Kevin Lamberth sent these pictures from Celle recording another little-known unit — this time German. 'The Rammjäger unit was used specifically against the B-17s on April 7, 1945 in this area', wrote Kevin. 'The memorial is sited north of the village of Bockelskamp near a wood where a battle was fought on April 13, 1945. A memorial service was held this April [1994] attended by former members of the unit.' L-R: Hajo Herrmann, Karl-Heinz Langspecht, Otto Köhnke, Werner Zell, Hugo Römer, Hans Füssinger and Oberstleutnant Ulrich Saft, author of *Das Bittere Ende der Luftwaffe*.

Memorials to German feats of arms are now becoming more plentiful, especially in Germany. Kevin Lamberth of 2 Royal Anglian Regiment, who has spotted several at Munsterlager, told me of an unusual one at Bockelskamp, just outside Celle, on a private landing strip which runs beside the River Aller. This one, complete with propeller, records the little-known Luftwaffe 'kamikaze' unit — the Rammkommando Elbe and the Sonderkommando 'Bienenstock'. (A book — in German — about the unit's last-ditch attempts to ram American bombers has been written by Oberstleutnant Ulrich Saft and is published by Verlag-Saft, Postfach 10 1545, 3012 Langenhagen 1.)



'The other photo is of a memorial to "fallen gaspioniere" in my camp,' continued Kevin. 'Trenchard Barracks — then von Seekt-Kaserne — was a gas warfare school — the equivalent of Porton Down which came into the story in issue 79. The theory was done here and the practical work at Dennis Barracks at Munsterlager.'



Left: Had the 'memorial' erected at Eaglesham in Scotland in May 1993 been more in the nature of a simple 'marker', it need not have caused upset. As it was, the inclusion of words like the 'brave heroic Rudolf Hess' was bound to create trouble and it was soon demolished *right*. Readers interested in furthering their knowledge of the Hess saga should avail themselves of a



copy of Tony Le Tissier's new book, *Farewell to Spandau*, published by Ashford, Buchan and Enright of Leatherhead, Surrey. As the British Governor of Spandau Allied Prison at the time of Hess' death, Tony was intimately involved in the behind-the-scenes events of August 1987 and I am very pleased that he has at last been allowed to tell his side of the story.

Even more unusual was the appearance of a memorial in Scotland to the arrival of Rudolf Hess (issue 58) in May 1941. It had been unofficially erected in May 1993, supposedly by neo-Nazi supporters based in England, and the low-key ceremony which marked its appearance went unnoticed by the press. Had the wording been non-controversial, it might well have gone unnoticed, but, having already attracted visitors from Germany, when news of its existence was publicised in November, members of the Anti-Nazi League soon put paid to it with a sledge-hammer. Fortunately, *The Scotsman* was able to provide this nice pair of 'then and now' photographs.

Another aviation memorial, erected in Wales, was the result of a 15-year project for aviation historian Alun Evans. Fifty years to the day when, on September 5, 1943, shortly before midnight, a Lancaster bomber from

Right: Remote memorial on a Welsh hillside erected exactly 50 years after the loss of Lancaster W4929 and its eight-man crew: Pilot Officers N. T. Duxbury and T. F. E. Johnson; Sergeants J. G. Curan, F. W. Pratt, L. Holding and R. Wilson; Flight Sergeant F. M. Buckby of the Royal Australian Air Force and Pilot Officer V. R. Folkerson of the Royal Canadian Air Force.



No. 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit based at Winthorpe in Nottinghamshire crashed into a mountain-side near Llyn-y-Fan, Llandeusan, Carmarthenshire, killing all eight crew members, the memorial was flown to the crash site by a helicopter of the RAF's No. 202 Squadron, and was dedicated by Group Captain the Reverend John Thomas, who addressed a gathering of relatives and friends. Others present were Air Vice Marshal Danny Henly, members of Ammanford Walkers' Club, and staff representing Airwork Ltd of the Proof and Experimental Establishment, Pendine, who cast, engraved and presented the memorial.

I was also very pleased to receive pictures from Marty Black of Crystal Lake, Illinois, of Ernie Pyle's memorial on the island of Ie Shima. We described his death in issue 43, the spot where he was killed being depicted on page 4. However, at the time, Charles Leonard could not get to the small island off the north-western corner of Okinawa so it was nice to see that the commemorative marker shown on page 5, erected in 1945, is still well maintained. During his visit in April 1993, Marty also photographed Sugar Loaf, now almost totally excavated for the construction of a new municipal centre. Dodging security personnel, he found many relics bulldozed out of the ground, and even more with his metal detector.



Left: Another remote memorial pictured by Marty Black on the far side of the world on the island of Ie Shima off the north-western tip of Okinawa. It marks the spot where Ernie Pyle was killed on April 18, 1945. **Right:** Flying the Pacific with Coast Guard squadron VP-90, disbanded in September 1993, gave Marty the opportunity to regularly visit Okinawa, in particular Sugar Loaf Hill where the Marines suffered over 2,500 casualties. 'I was astonished to see the changes', wrote Marty following a visit in April 1993. 'The long-rumoured city park is finally being built and bulldozers, back-hoes and graders have transformed the area, so much so that it is difficult to describe. The hill has been cut away, lowering the topography by 20 feet, and all the caves are gone.' Although he was repeatedly chased off by 'a stern-face cop in a black sedan who gave me the "crossed arms" signal', Marty persisted in searching the area and even found an undamaged Coca-Cola bottle dated 1945.



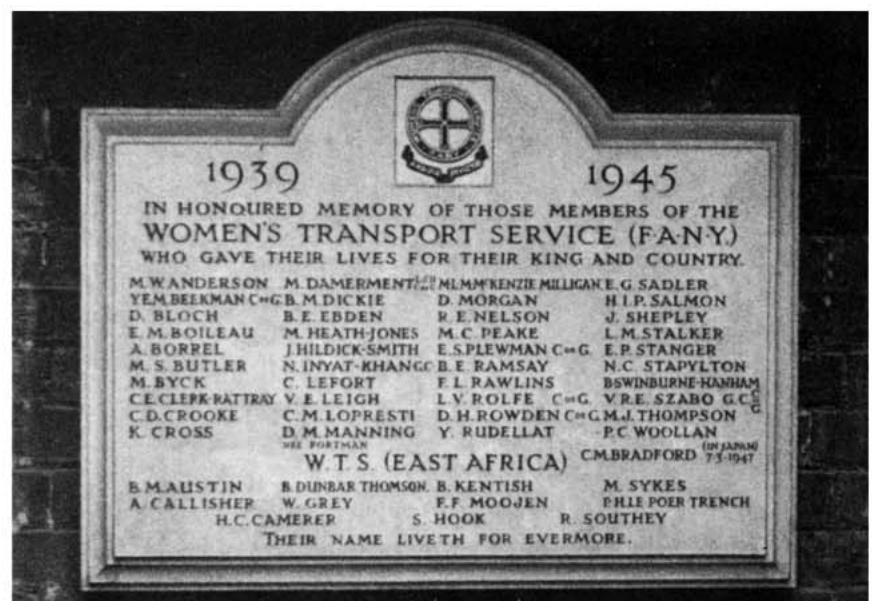
Above: Nearer to home, Tony Brown of Haverhill, Suffolk, sent me photographs of an unusual grave he had found while cycling in his area: 'I stopped to look at the small church in Wixoe and noticed that one of the graves had a strange symbol with the name "Vladimir Peniakoff". It was only later that I discovered that he was the founder of "Popski's Private Army" who had died in 1951.' Lieutenant Colonel Peniakoff (left) was born in Belgium of Russian parents and fought with the French in World War I. He joined the British Army at the beginning of the Second World War and proved himself to be an exceptional leader while serving in North Africa with the Long Range Desert Group. In October 1942, he set up his own raiding force comprising just 23 men, although it later expanded to nearly 200 and became known as 'Popski's Private Army' — even wearing its own 'PPA' insignia. It carried out raids and reconnaissance behind enemy lines, operating later in Italy and Austria. Although Peniakoff was decorated after the war by the British, French and the Belgians, little was known of his exploits until he published his book *Private Army* in the year before his death. 'Several weeks after I had found the grave,' continued Tony, 'I heard an appeal on the Ed Stewart Radio 2 slot "Where are they now?" A former PPA member, Jim Eastham, wanted to get in touch with other men of this unique unit. I contacted him and found that he had traced seven including ex-Corporal Ben Owen in Wolverhampton who looks after the interests of the PPA and who also wrote of their exploits after the war.'

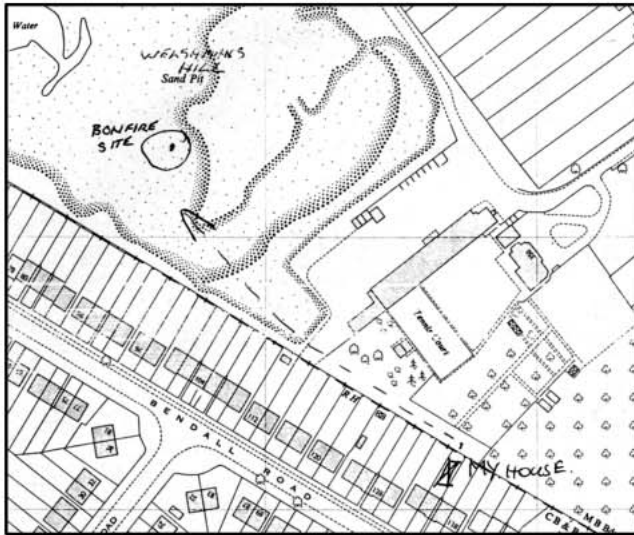
The feature in issue 79 on mustard gas provoked interest from several 'media' concerns, so we may well see a television documentary on the subject in due course. In March 1993, the Pentagon announced that those American servicemen (reputedly some 60,000) who were subjected to chemical weaponry experiments during the war, were no longer required to keep silent. Two months later, I was very interested to receive a letter from one of our long-standing over-

seas subscribers telling us that he, along with thousands of volunteer British servicemen, had also been subjected to gas experiments. He was subjected to mustard at Sandown Park Racecourse at Esher, Surrey, in the latter stages of the war, and even sent me a photocopy of his AB64 to prove it. 'However,' he wrote, 'I would not like you to mention my name in your magazine as it could adversely affect my British old-age pension!'

Another ex-service reader, Mr G. E. Skuse of Choppington, Northumberland, was serving in HMS *Bicester* (he corrected our spelling) in Bari harbour. 'I had settled down to write a letter when there was a terrific explosion, the lights went out, and the ship heeled over. We rushed on deck and a terrible sight was to be seen. We went round the harbour, pulling men out of the water but, because there was a blazing merchantman drifting toward the harbour entrance,

The war behind enemy lines was by no means the sole preserve of men. The picture (right) was sent to me by Patrick Carney of Wolverhampton but the memorial plaque is at St Paul's Church in Wilton Place, Knightsbridge. As Patrick observes, 'the casual visitor would barely give it a second glance; if they did, the words "First Aid" would probably bring to mind ambulances, the Blitz, and stretcher-bearers . . . Perhaps they would smile at the odd abbreviation "FANY" but then pass by, none the wiser.' Yet what brave deeds lie behind its simple inscription and the innocuous-sounding Women's Transport Service. FANY stood for the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry — an independent voluntary corps of women who did sterling work during the First World War, but during the Second it provided an excellent cover organisation for the Special Operations Executive. Over half of SOE's women agents belonged to FANY and several of those named on the plaque have been decorated with the Croix de Guerre, but one name stands out: V. R. E. Szabo, the first woman to be awarded the George Cross.





Welshman's Hill, Sutton Coldfield. Then, it was a sand pit where Gordon Baker witnessed the burning of undelivered parcels in 1945. Now, a housing estate occupies the area.

we had to take a chance to get out to the open sea. We couldn't understand why we were being sick and when it became light we couldn't bear it; our eyes were burning. There were blisters round our eyes and on those parts of our bodies not covered up.

'We all suspected that there had been some sort of gas there but no one would confirm it and it was a very long time until the truth came out. I am glad to say that, up to now, I have not suffered any lasting effects.'

And Patrick Sullivan of Witney, Oxfordshire, who served with the 70th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment, was another volunteer who took part in gas experiments at Porton Down, testing the proof of various uniform materials used by enemy forces to vesicant gases. He also tested a new respirator under development at that time.

In issue 81, we included an account of Army Post Office 640, and this provoked a response from Gordon Baker of Tewkesbury who in 1945 lived in Bendall Road, Sutton Coldfield. He included a map and a current photo of Welshman's Hill where, he said, 'the Americans were burning hundreds of parcels and letters on the sand pit. This burning went on for a considerable period, until VE Day. An American sentry, with a rifle, stood by whilst two German PoWs opened mail sacks and destroyed the contents. Occasionally, the guard would cut open a parcel and extract cigarette packs, he would then cut them in half just to spite people like me who used to watch. Women who moved too close to try and retrieve things were threatened with the rifle. The GI sometimes found watches; on one occasion he had five strapped to his forearm.'

'Lorries delivering the mailbags had to negotiate the sand dunes; the braver civilians managed to get on the back and throw the mailbags down and, as there was no escort for the driver, he was unaware of this. When the PoWs and guards went at the end of the day, dozens of us approached the bonfires with rakes to salvage anything. Some were lucky because some of the packages were so dense they did not catch fire easily. The odd watch and wrist bracelet with the serviceman's name and number on it was found. Everything you could send to a serviceman was there: gum, cakes, razor blades, photographs and letters. My father was still using said razor blades two years later.'

'One can only assume at that period of time, so many were MIA or KIA that it was impossible to send the mail back to the USA, and many packages had no return address. I believe the commanding officer got a reprimand and was posted for not distributing the parcels to the Princess Alice orphanage and the local hospital.'

Martin and Fran Collins, authors for the APO 640 story, confirmed that a Major Jernigan was relieved of his post after edible items were found on a dump at Minworth (on the outskirts of Sutton Coldfield) and that the area mentioned by Mr Baker may have been used as a secondary dumping site. Martin and Fran hope to include more details in their next book on the US replacement depot at Pheasey Farm.

Although I do not include formal reviews of books in *After the Battle*, I like to bring readers' attention to publications of particular interest. Manuel van Eyck, who contributed the article 'Silent Heroes' in issue 75, has since published his book *Zemreli jsmo pro Angeli* (We died for England) covering the exploits of Czechoslovak fighter pilots during their service with the RAF. Copies are \$30 (plus \$9 airmail) direct from Manuel van Eyck, 12365 Cohasset Street, North Hollywood, California 91605.

With excellent timing, the Imperial War Museum in London has joined forces with The Battery Press of Nashville, Tennessee (well known for their facsimile reprints of out-of-print unit histories) to reprint the two volumes of the official British history of the 1944-45 campaign in North-West Europe, *Victory in the West*. As Dr Bayliss, Keeper of the Department of Printed Books, comments in his introduction: '... it is particularly fitting that this reprint is the result of yet another example of successful co-operation between the wartime Allies, Britain and the United States'.

Dr Bayliss explains that 'Having already

produced several of the rarer First World War British official histories in conjunction with Battery Press, it seemed a logical step to progress to the Second World War histories. Thanks to the willing co-operation of the Cabinet Office Historical Section (responsible for the compilation of the history) and Her Majesty's Stationery Office (responsible for the publication of the two volumes), we are able to make this sought-after scholarly work more widely available. As a welcome bonus to readers, the reprinted volumes contain the source references to the official documents on which the histories were based but which were not included in the volumes as originally published. Researchers visiting the Public Record Office can now go armed in advance with the file numbers of any documents they might wish to inspect.'

Dr Bayliss hopes that if this venture is successful, it will be possible to bring further volumes of the Second World War history back into print. Available from the Department of Printed Books, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ, price £35 (including postage).

'A well-researched unit history with many interesting photos, some of which are of particular interest to us', noted my ETO Editor, Karel Margry, having purchased a copy of Dr Walter Reichelt's *Phantom Nine, The 9th Armoured (Remagen) Division 1942-1945* published by Presidial Press in the USA. I reproduce below one of the pages with Karel's remarks. No comment!



Gary Simpson has finally produced his book *Tiger Ace* on Michael Wittmann which we first mentioned in *Panzers in Normandy Then and Now* some ten years ago. He has also written a film script on Wittmann. *Tiger Ace* is published by AFV Panzer Historical Research Center, PO Box 2611, Boise, Idaho 83701.

Greg Jones, 3704 Pontoon Road, Granite City, Illinois 62040, has also privately published a slim volume, *Panzerheld*, his account of Wittmann's exploits which he claims includes previously unpublished photographs and interviews — including a picture lifted without permission from our issue 48!

And while on the subject of Wittmann, Trevor Popple, our film-buff author (issues 35, 40, etc.) sent me a marvellous guitar rendition of the *Panzerlied* (reproduced in *Panzers in Normandy Then and Now*) in the style of Hank Marvin of The Shadows. Trevor plays in a group called the 'Evening Shadows' and he wrote to me in February 1994: 'Thought you might like a copy of my new album (!) though I have to admit that it is heavily derivative of Mike Wittmann and the Tigers' earlier pre-Normandy recordings. It doesn't emulate the fuller tone present on Wittmann's material recorded during his later Villers-Bocage period with its attendant, lush 21st Armeegruppe orchestral backing. But at least it's in stereo!'

I am trying to persuade Trevor to include his version of the *Panzerlied* on his next tape which he could call *Evening Shadows Play WWII* but, meanwhile, any readers who are Shadows fans can obtain his latest cassette by sending £4.99+50p postage to Evening Shadows, 6 Ellesmere Avenue, Beckenham, Kent BR3 2NN.

Following up on the story he did for us in 1983 in issue 42, Achiel Rely of Mortsel, Belgium, writes in June 1993 that '“Disaster at Antwerp” was, to me, the start of a more elaborate reconstruction of Mission No. 50 which finally culminated with my book being published in 1988. More than enough material remained left over, and a second book of 248 pages was published only a few months ago, just in time to be part of the 50th commemorative ceremonies of the blackest day in the history of Mortsel/Antwerp.

'With the prospect of the forthcoming ceremonies, Belgian television asked me to assist in the production of a documentary reconstruction, a proposition which of course I accepted. Not only was I so lucky to find good local witnesses, but in addition three veterans of the Eighth Air Force and a former Luftwaffe fighter pilot agreed to participate. The three Americans arrived at Deurne/Antwerp airport on Saturday, January 16. When turning downwind for the runway in use, they flew — without knowing it — right over the target they had failed to destroy 50 years earlier. Two days after their arrival, I took them to the TV studios in Brussels, where they set out their recollections in front of the TV cameras.

Joe Consolmagno (navigator of the *Li'l Abner*) landed with his parachute in the middle of the Cockerill Shipbuilding Yards at Hoboken/Antwerp, being seen by many workmen who made the V-sign. He returned to the spot where he came down and where his aircraft crashed. Doug Bowles, the radio operator of *Kelly Ross*, who had landed behind the dykes of the Schelde river with injuries to his back, was taken to the military hospital in Antwerp. With the help of Jean Dillen, a local amateur historian like me, he was able to pay a visit to the same hospital ward where German doctors had taken care of him half a century earlier. Jim O'Brien (pilot of *Liberator* 819 of the 44th Bomb Group) was one of the last to return to base after dropping his bombs but was shot down over Kiel only a few weeks later.'

I always appreciate receiving photographs of relics and remains from readers, and it is



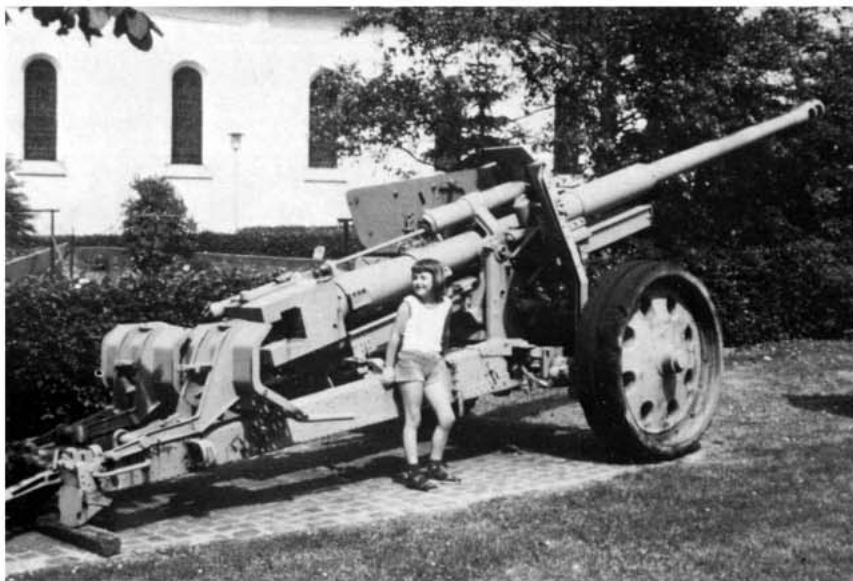
Since we published Achiel Rely's account about the abortive raid on the ERLA aircraft factory in Antwerp on April 5, 1943, he has produced two detailed books on the subject: *Bommen op Mortsel* and *Geen Oorlogskruis voor Mortsel*. In January 1993, three of the American crewmen returned to Belgium to participate in a television documentary planned for the 50th anniversary of the disaster which killed nearly 1,000 civilians. Achiel (left) with Jim O'Brien, Joe Consolmagno and Douglas Bowles at Deurne airport where aircraft manufactured at the ERLA plant were test flown.

an embarrassment that space does not permit me to include more. Theo van Velthoven of Kalmthout, Belgium: 'Enclosed you will find pictures of the German 8.8cm PaK 43/41 at Heinerscheid in Luxembourg. Believe it or not, this is the same gun as the one shown on page 492 of *Battle of the Bulge Then and Now*. The place is now transformed as a memorial with the addition of an American 105mm — both guns, beautifully painted, stand on a bed of stones.'

'I have recently returned from a visit to Germany', wrote Mr J. Hearne of Slough, Buckinghamshire. 'Enclosed are a few photos you may be interested in of a small Bavarian town known as Steinhoring. This

was one of the places of the Lebensborn programme. The building is now used as a special hospital and the statue you see of a mother holding her child is very beautiful but it is a pity to see it covered up.'

An interesting set of photos was sent from Trinidad by Laurie Goldstraw 'of a 21-inch torpedo which was washed up at the same spot where Columbus is reputed to have landed in AD 1498. No country around here wants to claim it, and nobody here had any knowledge of torpedoes apart from myself and my acquaintance of them goes back to 1944 when I was a seaman torpedoman in the RN. As the local Defence Force were worried about it, they flew me down in a



Theo van Velthoven pictured his little daughter beside the same 8.8cm PaK which Jean Paul Pallud featured in *Battle of the Bulge Then and Now* looking rather sorry for itself back in 1984. Theo also explained that the PaK 43 on the top right of page 492 has now been moved to a bend in the Clervaux-Trois-Vierges road but is now missing its muzzle brake.



Two contrasting facets of Hitler's Third Reich. Left: Mr J. Hearne pictured this mother and baby hidden away under trees at the Lebensborn hospital at Steinhoring (on Bundesstrasse 304 just east of Munich). Right: Photographed by Mr R. Richely



of Brussels at Hydrequant in the Pas-de-Calais, the massive armoured shutters intended for the V3 installation at Mimoyecques (see issue 6). The long-range gun site near Marquise is now open to public view.

helicopter to have a look at it. I was able to reassure them that it was fitted as a practice torpedo and would not go bang. It was highly unlikely anyway that it would have been anything other than this as "live" torpedoes sink at the end of their pre-set run (or are supposed to) whereas those fired in the practice mode become positively buoyant at the end of their run to enable them to be recovered and re-used, as of course they cost quite a bit.



"Our" torpedo looked to me very much like the British Mk1X** which I met in the late 1940s. These were powered by an engine running on compressed air and shale oil, and this one has a definite smell of shale oil plus, of course, the large air vessel. It also has notices in English. The torpedo in question had obviously been in the water for some time, and my theory is that it was fired for practice by either a Brazilian or an Argentinean submarine way down in the South Atlantic and for some reason was not recovered. It was then carried gently along by the South Equatorial Current which tends to run northward along the east coast of South America, until it reached our south coast. Naval ordnance experts were called in from the United States and it subsequently transpired that the torpedo is a French-manufactured L-5, one label inside stating that it was loaded on "25-5-92".

Reg Perry wrote to me from Portland, Dorset: 'I recently visited the decoy site at Chickerell Hive which was set up to distract enemy aircraft away from Portland Harbour and, in particular, the oil storage tanks on the causeway. Nothing is known of this by locals on Portland, not even to people in the National Fire Service there at the time. It was in the control of the Navy and was a well-kept secret.

'I went to Chickerell Hive with Mr Gardiner, Mr Bonner and Dave Marshall, who showed me the remains of the decoy site control which included an underground bunker, brick-built coal store, battery shop and toilet. The last two were constructed of galvanised corrugated sheet now showing large areas of corrosion after nearly 50 years. The battery shop now has a new sheet roof of modern design. The decoy site was constructed by the Denham Film Studios.

'Mr Gardiner was a naval petty officer in charge of the site during the period 1943-45. The site was then under the control of

Boscawen at Portland. It extended right down to the field to the west of the track leading to the Hive crossing point and was arranged in sections which could be ignited separately as required. At the Fleet end was a wooden jetty built by the RAF for access to the other side where another part of the decoy existed. The RAF also made a tarmac road to the Hive.

'The entrance to the bunker had a board above the door with HMS *Enoch* on it although it is not known if this was its official name or born of a sense of humour. Mr Gardiner described the tanks on the site as being raised on stilts for access to the inside which was filled with combustible materials. Although of large diameter, they were only about 14 feet high; all that was needed to look right from the air. Mr Gardiner recalls that while serving at the site, he was shown photographs of what the area looked like from the air. The whole decoy site was known officially as PEWS (Portland Experimental Works Site).'



Usually, one can find very little evidence remaining of decoy sites, which were set up to draw enemy bombing away from vulnerable targets, so I was pleased to learn from Reg Perry that some of the installations at Chickerell Hive, north of Portland and designed to protect the naval installations there, still survive. The site extended down the field to the right of the track leading to Fleet Lagoon. Beyond the lagoon is Chesil Bank and the open sea. The battery shop on the right has had a new roof; on its far side is the overgrown entrance to the underground bunker.



Mr J. McCabe of Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland: 'I enclose some pictures taken when my wife and I were on holiday in Crete. I came across this tank while wandering along the scrub off the beach roughly between Maleme airfield and more I would say toward the river bed of the Tavronitis. The snap was taken looking west with the sea on my right hand, and the bridge on my left, approximately a couple of hundred yards away. Could this be the tank on page 6 of issue No. 47?'

Damien Leavy of Swansea also sent a picture he had taken on Crete: 'I came across this desk in an outbuilding while being shown around the German headquarters building shown on page 17 of your issue No. 47.'

Following Fred Nash's article in issue 81 on Spigot Mortars, several sightings have been sent in to me: from Mr M. G. Harries of Oswestry, Shropshire, of a mount spotted in Llanfyllin, Powys; from Mr G. Harries (I presume no relation) of Saffron Walden, Essex, of one right outside The Victory pub in the town, and from Eric Rhodes of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, showing two still extant in King's Lynn.

Spigot mortar mounts: *right in Llanfyllin, North Wales, and far right: Saffron Walden in East Anglia.*



A reminder of flying training in Canada pictured by Pat Murphy at Medicine Hat in British Columbia. Although the airfield is

still used for flying, its acres of empty tarmac present a sad sight 50 years on.

Pat Murphy of Vancouver, British Columbia: 'No. 34, Senior Flying Training School was located at Medicine Hat. There are 54 RAF graves in Medicine Hat Cemetery and a new memorial to honour the RAF was put up by the Royal Canadian Legion in April 1991. There was a German prison camp here and in 1943 the prisoners were getting cooked ham. Local housewives paraded in anger and the RAF was forced to take over running the camp. The RAF carried out mock "raids" on the camp in 1944. The seat stands in front of #2 hangar, the RAF's motto at Medicine Hat being: "Hurry up and wait!"'



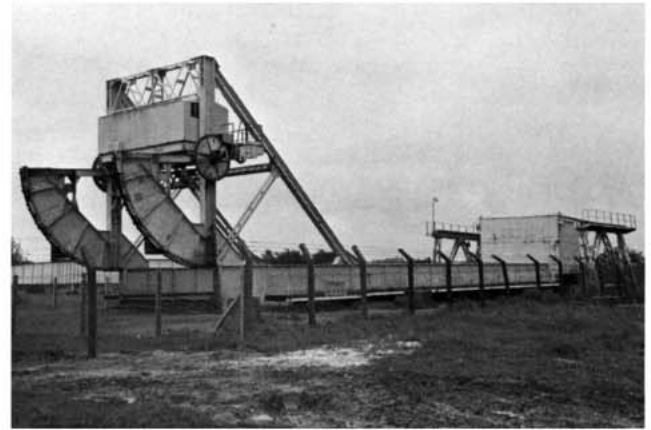


Is nothing sacred? George Siposs of Costa Mesa, California, sent me a photo he had recently taken at Malmedy in Belgium — scene of the massacre in December 1944 (see issue 4 and

Battle of the Bulge Then and Now) — with the hallowed ground opposite the memorial now desecrated with the erection of a garden centre.



The bullet-scarred bridge which means so much to so many, pictured here by Ludovic Meyer of La Madelène de Nonancourt, France, in August 1993. Pegasus Bridge, captured so heroically on the night of June 5-6, 1944, was deliberately removed in the months before the 50th anniversary, upsetting

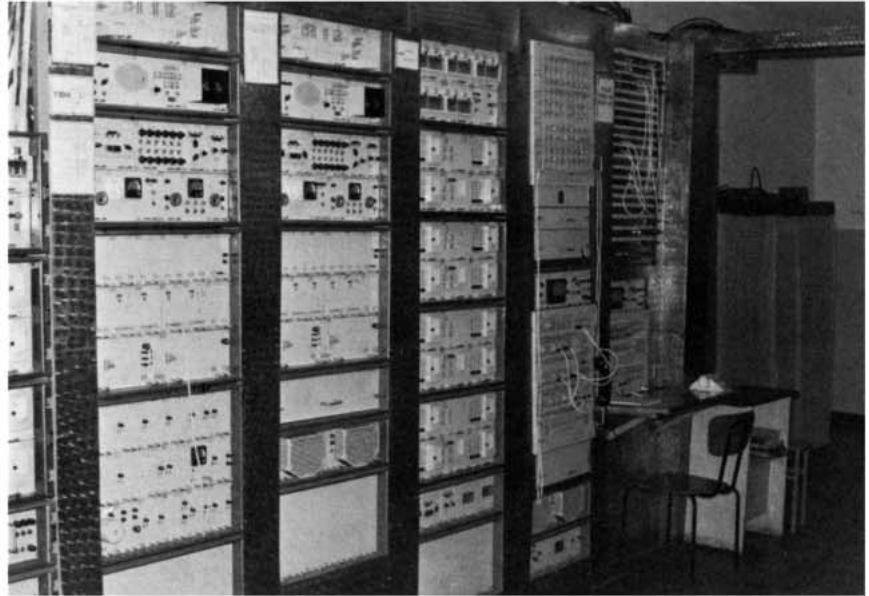


everyone . . . except perhaps the designer of the replacement who, when interviewed, stated that he could not see what all the fuss was about as the new one was the same shape, just a bit wider and longer! A decision on the fate of the old bridge was purposely held over until the anniversary was out of the way.



While Pegasus Bridge languished at Ranville, news came of the demolition of another historic bridge, this time in former East Germany, with all the overtones of the act being politically motivated. Soviet and American forces met near Torgau on April 25, 1945, the bridge across the River Elbe being a symbol of the link-up. Following reunification, a new bridge was constructed nearby and the old one closed last year. Local

people wanted the 124-year-old bridge preserved, but instead it was blown up in a secret operation on the evening of June 16, designed to pre-empt next year's 50th anniversary celebration. 'This is the second time the Germans have blown up the bridge', said a disgusted 58-year-old Fritz Werner. 'The first was on April 24, 1945 when the retreating Wehrmacht tried to destroy it. We can be proud of ourselves.' (AP)



Dr Peter Schenk of Berlin (author of stories in issues 69 and 76) has also been out and about inspecting sites of installations which were formerly verboten during the communist era. North of the city, he photographed the blown bunker of the 'Koralle' headquarters, established near Lobethal in 1939, and used after the war by the Soviet 20th Guards Army. Now, it has been taken over by the Bundesvermögensamt although the two surface bunkers, blown by retreating German forces in 1945, are not fenced off.

Peter has also inspected another V2 test site, this time the one at Heidelager in Poland, in conjunction with Krzysztof Rogala and writes that 'after the devastating air raid on Peenemünde on August 17, 1943 (issue 74), another test site had to be found with better camouflage. Eventually, Heidelager, an SS exercise area in occupied Poland, roughly midway between Krakau (Krakow) and Lublin, was chosen. A large clearing, roughly a square kilometre, was situated in the middle of extensive woodland at a place called Blizna. In October and November 1943, barracks and a large assembly building for the rockets were built. A railway track from the Krakau-Lemberg (now Lwow) line led directly into this hall. A narrow-gauge railway connected the barracks with the hall and the launching pads. A concrete road was built from the nearest highway and the whole area fenced in with double barbed wire.

Another site in East Germany, blown up in 1945 but now accessible, if only partly, is the 'Koralle' complex north of Berlin. The Bundeswehr took over the undamaged buildings in March 1992, this bunker (left) having four floors below ground fitted out with Russian electronics (right) when it served as the former headquarters of the Soviet 20th Guards Army. Dr Peter Schenk visited the two demolished bunkers (below) which lie outside the fence.

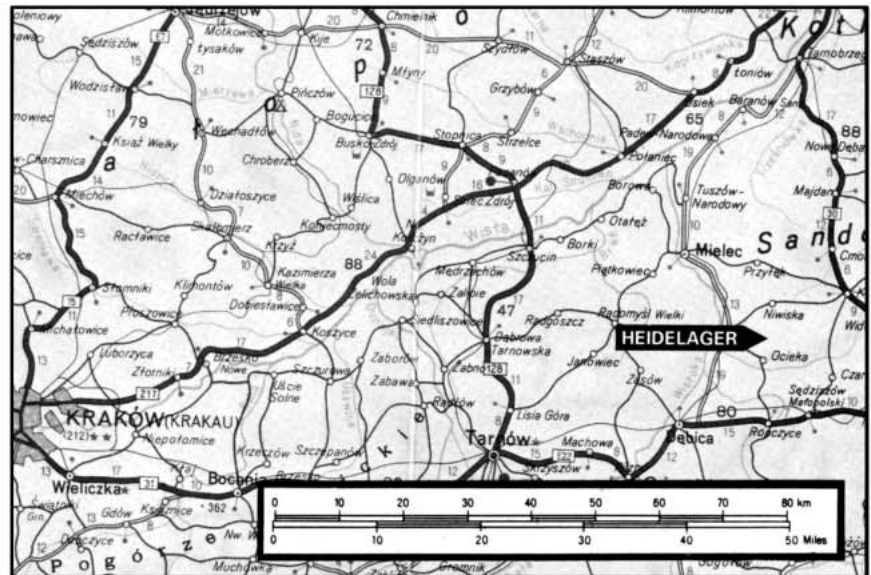


Peter has also visited Heidelager — also seen referred to as Blizna — the V2 test site in Poland.

'At the end of October 1943, an experimental rocket battery, the 444. Batterie, and an experimental staff under Major Weber was established and deployed to Heidelberg, its function to train soldiers to launch the V2. The first shot was fired on November 5, but it was a failure as the launching platform was only resting on sand. After ignition, the rocket's exhaust blew away the sand from under one of the legs of the platform which tilted, causing the rocket to take off at an inclined angle. It crashed three kilometres away. As a result, two concrete launch platforms were built.

'Later, the test site was used for the V1 'cruise missile', but at the end of July 1944 Heidelberg had to be given up because of the Soviet advance. A new test site — Heidekraut — was established in north-west Poland near Tuchel (Tuchola).

'Today, the concrete access road is the most obvious relic of Heidelberg. From the small-gauge railway, only the part that crossed the road has been preserved but one of the concrete launching platforms and a nearby shelter also exist. However, the other platform is only marked by a hole in the ground. Ruins of the transformer building can also be found but the barracks and the storage hall have completely vanished.'



Formerly an SS training area, Heidelberg will not be found under that name on maps today. Its position in southern Poland is indicated east of Krakow.



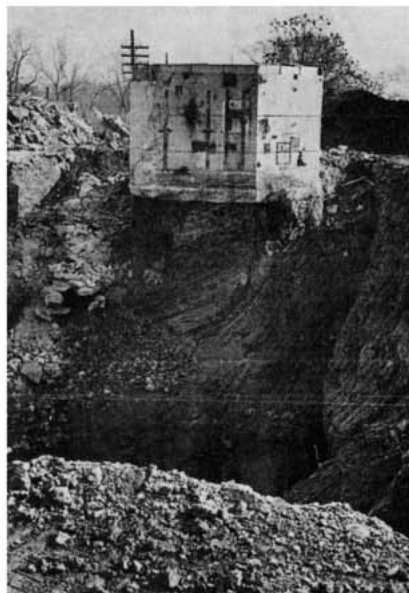
One of the two launch pads that were built.



The firing bunker on the edge of the open fields.

Just as the A4 rocket and the flying bomb were the Germans' secret weapons, so the atomic bomb must rank highest in the secret arsenal of the Western Allies. Readers will recall from issue 41 that the world's first reactor (Chicago Pile 1) was built on the sports field of the University of Chicago. CP1 was dismantled in 1943, being replaced by CP2 and CP3 built deep within Red Gate Woods., south-west of the city at Willow Springs. Fred R. Egloff of Oklahoma City wrote in June 1993 to tell us that 'the buildings took up 20 acres and were located at the end of a winding dirt road surrounded by dense forest visible only from the air. The public was unaware of the 1,000-acre site until 1946. The Atomic Energy Commission acquired land five miles west near Lemont and began construction of the new Argonne National Laboratory in 1948, whereupon the two nuclear reactors were buried in a 40-foot hole at the abandoned Manhattan Project site in 1956. The site is currently the subject of a \$3 million-plus investigation project by the Department of Energy which will take hundreds of soil samples and have them tested in a mobile laboratory specially set up on the site.

'Likewise, three of the University of Chicago buildings were recently decontaminated of radioactivity left by the World War II experiments. The radiation was described as slightly above normal "background", though considered harmless, increasingly stringent regulations required eliminating all unnecessary exposure. Enclosed are photos of those buildings used during the 1940s by the Manhattan Project.'



Left: As part of the Manhattan Project, two nuclear reactors were built south-west of Chicago in Red Gate Woods. In 1956, they were buried where they stood, together with unrecorded quantities of low-level nuclear waste. Tritium was detected in water from a local picnic area in the 1970s but it was decided that it would be more dangerous to try to dig out the waste than to leave it buried. However, the discovery of further discarded rubbish, including a piece of uranium on the surface in 1990, has now led to a full-scale survey. Right: Even the buildings used in the 1940s at the University of Chicago have undergone examination — this is Kent Hall with the adjacent Jones Chemical Laboratory pictured for us by Fred Egloff.

While on the subject of the atomic bomb, David Hale in Washington brought my attention to an interesting news item which had passed across his desk concerning the preservation in Japan of an 'atomic flame'.

It seems that Yamamoto Tatsuo was a young soldier stationed in Hiroshima in 1945. He witnessed the nuclear bombing of the city that August and, two days after the bombing, went to the home of his uncle. There, he found a fire burning in the rubble and, on impulse, used the flame to light his 'kairo' — a small hand-warmer fuelled with paraffin.

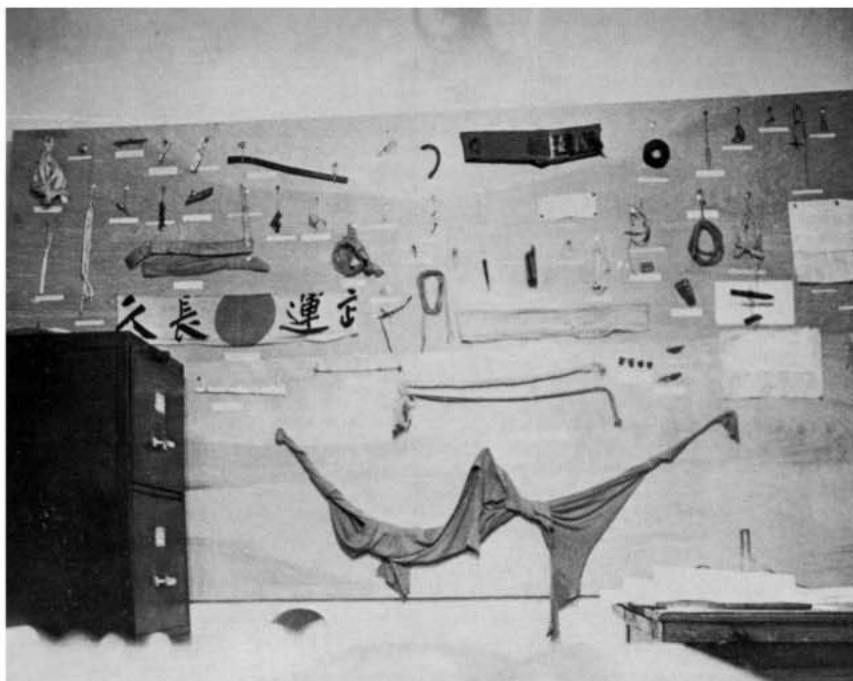
He kept the lamp alight until he returned to his house in Hoshino and used the flame to light his own 'kolatsu' (hearth). From that day on, he never let the flame die, never going away or on holiday and always ensuring that he had enough fuel to keep it alight.

By 1993, now a frail 78-year-old, he was concerned that having kept the fire burning for 48 years it would not survive beyond his death, so at a ceremony on May 3, the fire was used to kindle an eternal flame as a memorial to commemorate the crew of a B-29 brought down on May 6, 1945 by a young kamikaze pilot. The aircraft crashed in Sanko, a small village in the Oita Prefecture on the island of Kyushu. Now, it is intended that the flame should burn in perpetuity as a reminder to a new generation of young Japanese of the nation's tragic involvement in World War II.

Following publication of issue 81, I received a rather stern rebuke from Dr Walter Hood, who had taken several of the 1945 pictures at Sugamo Prison, in that I had not individually credited his photographs to him, in particular the one of the execution block on page 52. 'Unlike my other photographs that you included with the article, that of the execution building was taken at considerable risk to myself. I was in Tower 5 on guard duty when I took this extended time exposure by the lights of the tower in the dead of night.'

Of course I apologised for the omission — my caption on page 46 explained Dr Hood's rôle at Sugamo. In his reply, Dr Hood sent an interesting picture 'of the display of potentially-deadly articles recovered to prevent suicides, which was mounted in the Red West office. I took this picture also on a time exposure one night when I was on guard duty in the area.'

An unusual letter reached me in August 1993 from Martin Ellerby of London, SW7. He wrote that it was only by accident that he



Walter Hood: 'At Sugamo Prison, the long corridors connecting the six individual cell blocks ran approximately east and west. There was a Red West office and a Red East office, in each of which certain administrative matters were carried out. Each had a display of materials taken from prisoners, believed to be devices prepared for suicide attempts. For example, ropes were twisted from various materials, including paper. Certain sentenced prisoners worked outdoors, and some of these occasionally succeeded in getting metal fragments and slivers of glass past the body search that was required before each prisoner could return to his cell. (I found such objects on prisoners at times.) Incidentally, the first successful suicide attempt at Sugamo was carried out early Friday morning, August 29, 1947. I was one of the first guards to reach the cell block after the calling of an emergency, but the attempt had been discovered too late; the prisoner died.'

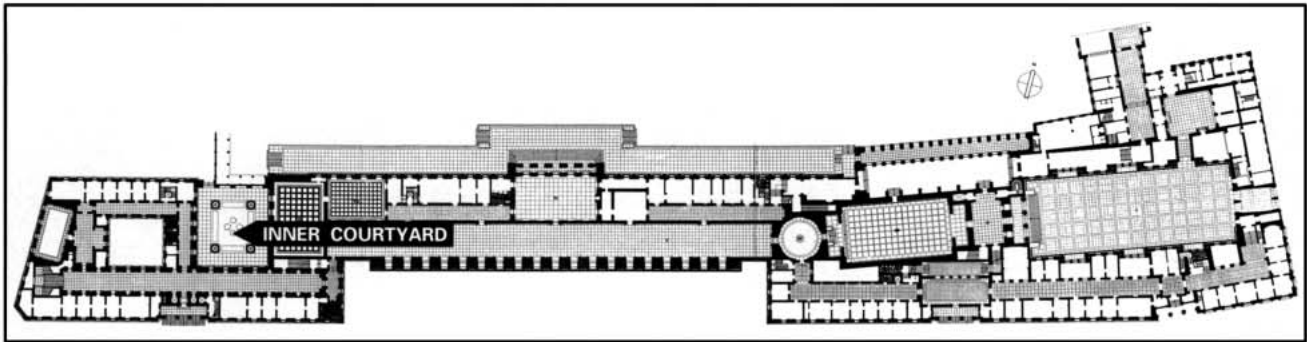
found a copy of issue 24 on the death of Heydrich and that it was 'only through your magazine that I was able to visit the precise location of the assassination site — itself "assassinated" by a ruthless new traffic development' (which we subsequently illustrated in issue 39). 'It is now a potential muggers' paradise and one is very much a target when wandering about with a camera.'

Anyway, the point of Martin's letter was that as a professional composer he was working on a series of 'Epitaphs' to various

incidents in the Second World War. His first, *Souviens-Toi*, was written for Oradour-sur-Glane (issue 1), and is included on the CD 'Martin Ellerby Chamber Music' issued by Serendipity, SERCD1 (available from Albany Records, PO Box 12, Carnforth, Lancs. LA5 9PD). Another of his Epitaphs, *Vocalise* to Katyn Wood, is on SERCD4000. Martin explained that he was currently working on a piece to commemorate the destruction of Lidice (also issue 24) which he had just visited.



Music to reflect inhumanity: composer Martin Ellerby soaks up the atmosphere at Oradour-sur-Glane (left) and Lidice (right).



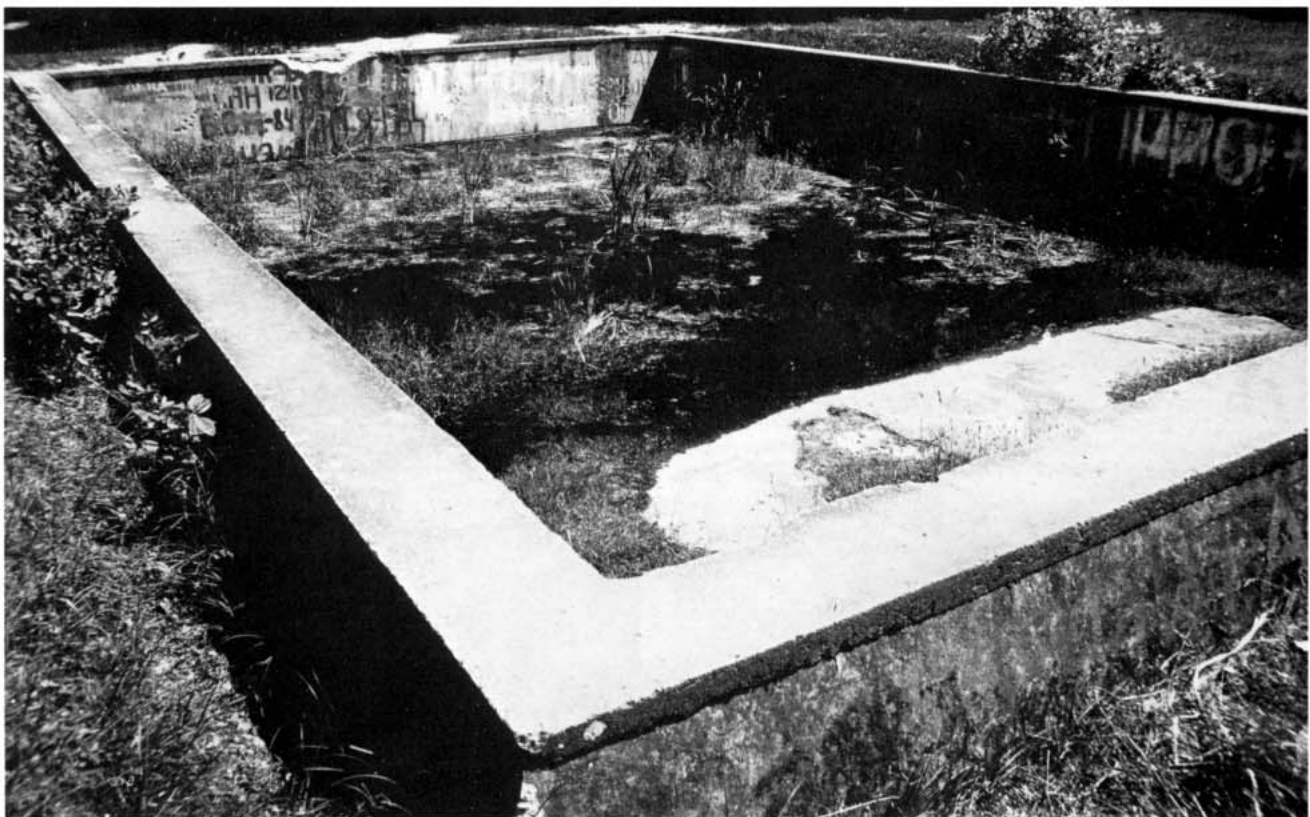
Latest discovery at Hitler's Chancellery in Berlin by Dr Alfred Kernd'l: the lower wall and floor of the enclosed courtyard at the western end of the building, complete with spang marks.

Dr Alfred Kernd'l, the Berlin archaeologist whom we mentioned in both *Berlin Then and Now* and issue 77, and who has been instrumental in seeking preservation of some of the cellars associated with the Reichs Chancellery, retired in February 1994. Against much opposition, he proposed in his final report to the Berlin Senat, the preservation of three locations:

a) The Fahrerbunker (the 'drivers' bunker' with the paintings, situated beneath the drivers' quarters on Hermann-Göring-Strasse);

b) The section of cellars beneath the Reichs Chancellery itself (illustrated on page 40 of issue 72); and

c) The inner courtyard of the Chancellery. The latter, illustrated here, was a recent discovery — and an amazing one at that as everyone presumed that the complete structure of the Chancellery had been demolished and removed.



Another of Hitler's headquarters was FHQu 'Wehrwolf' in the Ukraine where he stayed during the summer of 1942. When I compiled issue 19 with Dr Raiber in 1977, a photographic trip to this part of the Soviet Union was out of the question, so I had to be content with including two representative

contemporary pictures, one of which was the swimming pool. Readers will therefore understand my excitement on receiving a letter from Russia in March 1994 to find it enclosed several pictures of the 'Wehrwolf' site today, including this shot of the pool. Compare it with page 48 of issue 19.



The letter had come from Jaroslav Branko of Vinnitsa, the nearest town some eight miles to the south, the pictures having been taken by Vadim Kozlovsky. The swimming pool would appear to be the only feature still intact, the landscape being littered with massive lumps of reinforced concrete from the demolitions. Meanwhile, Hitler's main Eastern Front headquarters, the 'Wolfsschanze' at Rastenburg, is now under new management: the Wolf Lair Company. Polish entrepreneur Tadeusz Wasynski runs the enterprise as a business catering for up to 5,000 visitors each day, of whom some 20 per cent are German tourists visiting the former East Prussia. With a hotel and gift shop, they can now enjoy themselves in the 'Hitler Bunker' disco although the operators insist that the Wolf's Lair will not become a Nazi Disneyland!



By way of a contrast, Nikolai Bodrikhin in Moscow sent us pictures of the command bunker built for Marshal Stalin

(although never actually used by him) 37 metres below ground in Kuybyshev (formerly Samara).





Peter Cornish began diving in 1962 along the north coast of his native Cornwall. In 1964, he joined a new branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club that had just been formed in Hampstead, and within two years had progressed to become Diving Officer. In June 1971, he found his first aeroplane sitting on the bottom off Penzance, which fired his enthusiasm and led to a string of



WW2 projects over the next five years, culminating in the X5/X7 project (issue 17) in 1974. Right: The recovery of the remains of Halifax W1048 of No. 35 Squadron from a Norwegian lake — the only one of its type known to be preserved anywhere in the world — was masterminded by Peter. It can be seen today at the RAF Museum at Hendon.

In my last editorial in issue 80, I included a nice three-way comparison submitted by Douglas Wennberg. I sent him a copy, only to receive a reply from his wife to say that Douglas had died tragically shortly after I was in contact with him. 'I know how much my husband would have enjoyed it', wrote Mrs Wennberg. 'His son is carrying on the subscription to the magazine as we all enjoy reading it.'

Then I was shocked to learn — belatedly — that Peter Cornish of the British Sub-Aqua Club had died of a sudden heart attack in December 1992. Peter had been responsible for organising a number of underwater recoveries, two of which were written up in issues 2 and 6, although his real claim to fame was his epic search for the midget submarine X5 (issue 17).

Readers may recall that of the five X-craft which took part in the attack on the Tirpitz in Kaafjord, only the commanders of X6 and X7 were awarded the Victoria Cross. Peter felt that there was a possibility that X5 could also have entered the fjord and, if that was the case, the bravery of its captain and crew should likewise have been recognised. He was told unofficially by the powers that be that if he could prove that the X5 had laid her charges, then the posthumous grant of a VC would be considered.

This inspired Peter to press the search as far as was humanly possible, and no finer leader could have masterminded the expeditions to Norway. As Simon Fraser of the BSAC Hampstead Branch, to which Peter belonged, put it in his obituary:

'Peter led from the front by example. With unbounded enthusiasm he was able to motivate, encourage, organise and lead. Much of Hampstead's reputation was created by the projects that Peter organised with the club. Peter encouraged other members of the BSAC to participate in these projects such as the Beaufighter Project off Penzance, the Torpedo Project off Weymouth Harbour, the XE8 project in Lulworth Bay, the two expeditions to Kaafjord in Norway searching for a midget submarine, the Girl Rona project to raise a sunken trawler. Most of these projects involved lifting heavy objects from the seabed, bringing them to the surface and arranging for their transportation on land. Long before commercially-made lifting bags were available, he developed the technique of using large numbers of 40-gallon oil drums, attaching them to a strop and filling

them with air. If enough drums are attached, most things can be brought to the surface.

'Peter was able to accomplish more each day than most people could accomplish in a week. He lived life to the full, a friend to everybody, never an angry word crossing his lips. Above all, Peter was a family man, happily married to Barbara for more than 32 years, and father to Robert and Gavin. He was an inspiration to everyone and his memory will stay in the hearts of all who knew him. As a lasting memorial, John Plant, Chairman of Hampstead Sub-Aqua Club, would like to create the "Peter Cornish Memorial Trust" to collect sufficient funds so that an RNLI Inshore Lifeboat can be named after him. All donations should be made payable to the RNLI Peter Cornish Trust D Class Fund and sent to J. Plant, 360 Stag Lane, Kingsbury, London NW9 9AG.'

Don Marshall distributed copies of issue 82 at the Marine reunion at Houston, Texas, in November 1993 and he wrote to me in December:

'Our reunion went off just fine, everyone really appreciated Iwo Jima publication #82. A few comments . . . remember Marines were not known for polite language:

Damn you, Marshall, you kept me up till 2 a.m. — John Moore (5th Amphs), Santa Clara, California.

Best publication yet on Iwo Jima, he (meaning you, Winston) got some tremendous photos. Marshall, you scared the shit out of me . . . — Sam Nuzzo (5th Amphs), Dolton, Illinois.

I immersed myself . . . Iwo was the hell our drill instructors told us about. You have captured it as only a participant could . . . center photo of Coast Guard bidding farewell is very well done — Bob Hoskins, Major USMC Ret., 24th Marines, Carlsbad, California.

. . . my God, how could anyone live through that, what a fantastic publication . . .

— George and Joan Kauffman, Costa Mesa, California.

. . . enjoyed it very much — I think you did a very fine job — George 'Spike' Malcolm, Col. USMC (Ret.), Boulder, Colorado.

. . . sure I armed that grenade when I tossed it to you, I just wanted to see if you were alert. The story is great! — B. K. Eagan (5th Amphs), Kingman, Arizona.

*. . . exactly like it was. When does the f***ing movie come out . . . ?* — Ted Klien (crewman trac 66, 5th Amphs), Walton, Illinois.

OK Marshall, now we know who was always stealing our beer on Saipan . . . thanks for telling the Iwo story like it was — Engle and John Bergsied, Hawley, Minnesota.

'Just a few of the compliments on *After the Battle* and the job you did. You and your staff should take a bow!'



John Bradley receives a plaque commemorating the Iwo flag-raising from the President of the Lions Club, Ramiro Collazo, soon after the war.

As much as our Iwo Jima issue was well received by the Marines, one, sadly, never lived to see it. Marty Black had visited John Bradley, the last survivor of the Mount Suribachi flag-raisers, and planned to let him have a copy, but Mr Bradley died on January 11, 1994 in hospital in Antigo, Wisconsin.

Several readers sent me obituaries on John Bradley and Mr L. C. Englert of Wausau, Wisconsin, also included a photograph of the USS *Cobia*: 'On page 3 of issue 82 you mention "the island's few remaining tanks (26 were lost in July when the submarine *Cobia* sank the *Nisshu Maru*)."' I thought you would like to know that the USS *Cobia* is now at the Manitowoc Maritime Museum, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and was dedicated to all submariners of the world who gave their lives for their country.'



James Rusbridger worked with Colin Gibbon during the investigation to try to put a name to 'Major Martin'. They came up with Emlyn Howells (see issue 64) although further research by Roger Morgan appears to disprove this. Roger is currently trying to get access to various official files — if he is successful, you, our readers, will be the first to know.

Then, on February 16, 1994, James Rusbridger, the self-proclaimed MI6 agent and author of several books on intelligence matters, was found hanged in his cottage near Bodmin, Cornwall, in rather bizarre circumstances. James was a long-time reader of *After the Battle* and always very generous with information and advice, and I would often arrive in the office to find a fax had arrived overnight from him on some item he thought might be of interest. The 'Major Martin' saga was something that interested him greatly, and he assisted with the article in issue 64 which followed on from the original feature by Roger Morgan published in issue 54.

After the Battle publications are frequently used by film and television companies for research, and we are often informally involved. However, the prominent use of *The Blitz Then and Now* in the Alamo TV production *Goodnight Sweetheart* must be one of the most successful 'product placements' in a drama series — albeit completely unsolicited by us.

The series, written by Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, went out on BBC1 during the autumn and winter of 1993, and a further ten episodes are planned for 1994 — all using the book(s) as the influence behind the ability of the central figure, 'Gary Sparrow', played by



Product placement — the deliberate inclusion of goods in television dramas for commercial purposes — is officially not permitted in Britain. However, it goes on as we all know, the inducements offered to producers and directors covering everything from a free supply of the product to outright bribery. In the case of *The Blitz Then and Now* and *Goodnight Sweetheart*, we stand innocent of all charges: Laurence Marks actually purchased the copy seen so prominently in the series.

Nicholas Lyndhurst, to step back into the 1940s. (It's a small world as, apart from the Blitz connection, Nicholas is the son of Joe Lyndhurst whose military vehicle collection featured in issue 1!)

Laurence Marks told me that he first saw Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of *The Blitz Then and Now* on display at the 'Churchill's Britain at War' experience in Tooley Street, London. Having examined them and found that they gave all the events in wartime Britain on a day-to-day basis, he realised that the volumes would provide the ideal vehicle for Gary Sparrow to look up what happened on any particular day in 1940. Thus, Nicholas could be seen reading a particular page before he slipped backwards in time to that actual day in 1940.

Another film having wartime Britain as its central theme is *Hope and Glory* (1987) — a marvellous period re-creation by John Boorman. We were called upon to supply a large piece of genuine shrapnel for young Bobby to prise out of his gatepost after a raid and

other pieces were used to make up the gang's collection of trophies in their den.

And in the recent re-make of *Memphis Belle* (issue 69), the piece of hot shrapnel which landed on the radio operator's desk also came from our collection.

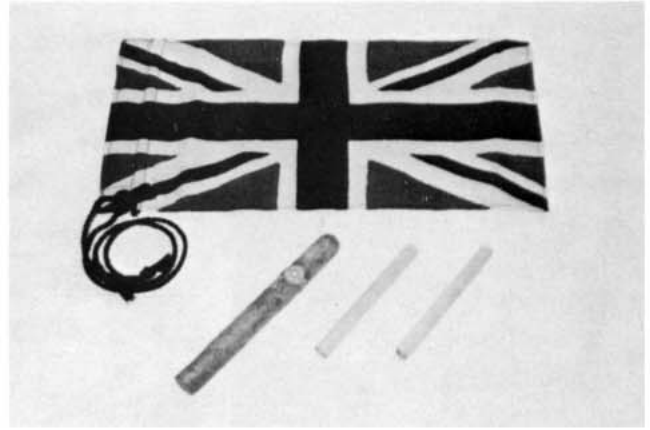
One of our readers willing to share a wartime relic with others is Ian Richards of Box 29 GRP 19 RR2, Dugald, Manitoba, Canada, ROE OKO. Ian wrote in February 1994 to say that he had found a roll of blue oilcloth with a heat-sensitive adhesive backing used by RAF ground crews to patch bullet-holes in aircraft fabric. 'My father was an RAF "Queen Mary" driver during the war, delivering new aircraft and picking up smashed ones for salvage', explained Ian. 'No doubt he traded or "liberated" this roll of cloth and I remember as a small child it was used for all kinds of things: book covers, wallets, patches, etc., and I am willing to supply pieces to other ATB collectors.' (Please send Ian an International Reply Coupon for postage.)



Product placement of a different kind: (left) set dressing in *Hope and Glory* and (right) red-hot shrapnel in *Memphis Belle*.



Berlin 1945. Churchill arrives for the British Victory Parade on Saturday, July 21. Damien Horn of the Channel Islands Military Museum at St Ouen, Jersey, now has the pennant from his car,



together with one of Churchill's cigars and Stalin's cigarettes, all from Major R. J. Hughes, RASC, who was officer in charge of vehicles for the 'Terminal' conference held in Potsdam.

Damien Horn of St Peter, Jersey, whose relics from the Chancellery featured in issue 62, sent me copies of some more interesting items passed to him by Major R. J. Hughes, who served with the RASC in Berlin in 1945, one nice item being the pennant from the car used by Winston Churchill at the Potsdam Conference.

I was very pleased to learn that Tony Le Tissier, author of *Berlin Then and Now* and the Horst Wessel story in issue 75, has been appointed as one of the British advisers to the Allied Commemorative Museum being set up in Berlin under the auspices of the German Historical Museum with Federal funds.

'In due course', says Tony, 'it will be getting the Outpost Cinema and Nicholson Memorial Library on Clayallee for its premises. The other members of the British team are Peter Wilkin of the Imperial War Museum and Bob Dixon of the Research and Analysis Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, so we are a pretty strong team in practical terms in comparison to the august professor doctors appointed by the other countries. Our first project is to mount some sort of pilot exhibition to coincide with the departure of the Allies in September 1994, and the board have accepted my proposal of "Stunde Null" to demonstrate the contrast between arrival and departure.'



Last parade in Berlin. In September 1945, the wartime Allies marched together through the German capital, but in June 1994 the Western Allies refused to parade with the Russians, saying that they had been stationed in Berlin for opposing ideological reasons. Some 2,000 British, French and American troops (above) held a separate march on June 18, and 1,500 Russians (below) on June 25.

The farewell parade in Berlin originally proposed for September this year — we had expressed the hope that something of the sort would be held on page 437 of *Berlin Then and Now* — was scuppered by politics

in almost a re-run of the antics of the Cold War. Instead, the three Western Allies held their own final parade on Armed Forces Day on June 18, and the Russians a separate one the following weekend.





'I won', was Mike McCormac's laconic note to me after the results of the Pooley's International Flying Competition for 1993 were announced. Not that Mike need look surprised; his presentation was outstanding and it earned him not only the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy (left), but also the Icarus Trophy (right) for the best solo entry.

I was extremely pleased to hear in December 1993 that Mike McCormac had won first prize in the Dawn to Dusk flying competition (issue 82). The thoroughness and detail with which he had prepared his entry, Operation 'Chastise', really has to be seen to be believed, and all his hard work was duly recognised with the award of the Duke of Edinburgh Trophy.

'For some time, I have wondered if the film *The Eagle Has Landed* could have been based on fact, and whether the Germans did raid the British coastline during WW2', wrote Paul Biddle of Sturminster Newton, Dorset, in July 1993. 'One example was a raid in Shingle Street in Suffolk as reported in *The Sunday Telegraph* in June 1992.'

The speculation over the reputed landing at Shingle Street, and its repulse by setting the sea on fire, has now become part of the folklore of the Second World War, so I was pleased to be able to include in our last issue an extract from James Hayward's book on the subject which put the myth firmly in its place.

In August 1982, when we published issue 37 on the various locations used in connection with 'The Ultra Secret', Bletchley Park, the main location of the Government Code and Cipher School, was still virtually intact. However, by 1986, plans were afoot to demolish the buildings, then mostly occupied by British Telecom, and redevelop the area for business and residential use. By 1991, it was apparent that unless something was done quickly, the developers might soon



Bletchley Park — billed as 'Britain's Best Kept Secret' — held its first open day in February 1994. Above: Looking at the second Hut 3, of 1942 vintage, with the original Hut 6 of 1939 on the right which handled German Army and Air Force codes. Below: The term 'Hut' was still applied to the later single-storey brick buildings, designating its function rather than its appearance. This one housed the second Hut 6 in 1943.

sweep away a most important piece of Britain's wartime history. So, in February 1992, the Bletchley Park Trust was formally set up with the aim of persuading the Government to preserve those buildings that were left and to establish within them a series of high-tech museums devoted to

code-breaking, telecommunications, radar, air traffic control and the like. A final decision is awaited but, meanwhile, the Trust, as semi-official custodian, is able to open some of the buildings on selected weekends. We joined one party in June 1994 and wish the Trust well in its endeavours.





It was also very good to hear in January 1994 that at least Hut 9, from where the German escape tunnel had been dug at Island Farm Camp, was to be retained.

Soon after we told the story of the PoW camp in South Wales in issue 67, moves were made to have the huts demolished for yet another industrial park. Len Jones of Caldicot, Gwent, wrote in July 1994 to give me details of the camp in its death throes:

'Following the rejection of a bid to purchase the entire camp by a German/Dutch consortium, Mid Glamorgan planners gave the go-ahead to demolish the first part of Island Farm, and so, on April 14 last, the machines moved in and down came the remains of the laundry block, followed by Huts 14, 26, 24, 22, 25, 23, 21, 16, 19, 15, 18, 20 and 1. Work then ceased following speculation about further bids to purchase the remaining huts on the north-eastern side, the only work continuing on site being stock-piling and crushing the rubble into hardcore for future use, with only the roadways remaining.

'Demolition of The Generals' Hut began on Saturday, April 30, and was completed the following Tuesday. Hut 15, the location of the first tunnel, was demolished on April 29, and the concrete base cleared of all debris the following day while I was on the site. However, examination of the slab showed no trace of a repair under the concrete stove base.

'On the subject of the first tunnel, prior to demolition of Hut 21 (the Generals' Dining Hall), I found, in the last bay of the ablutions block, a hole through the eight-inch reinforced concrete slab to the subsoil, approximately ten inches in diameter, but I find it hard to believe that someone went to the trouble of breaking through eight inches of steel-reinforced concrete in a darkened room with no light just for the hell of it.

'The end of this hut nearest the fence appears to be in good condition. Perhaps this hut was sealed up, and the hole not filled in. The tunnel site in Hut 15 would have meant

The prisoner of war camp of Island Farm experienced the largest escape of German PoWs in Britain during the war. During April and May 1994, Len Jones was on hand to photograph its demolition and to look for remains of the old tunnels. Above left: Repaired stove base in Hut 15 (No. 18 on the Mid Glamorgan numbering system) but (right) no sign of a repair to the concrete underneath.



The main escape tunnel from Hut 9, which is to be preserved, photographed from the field exit end.

digging under the water tower at the rear of the hut, and then towards the field, a lot further than the hole discovered in Hut 21. Noise of the digging could have been hidden by the noise from the dining hall and the adjacent cook-house.

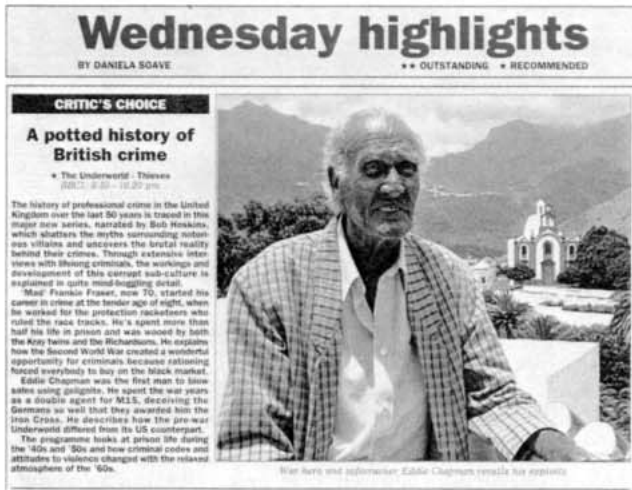
'My last visit to the camp was on Saturday, May 21, by which time any plans for possible purchase of the camp had fallen through. No huts were left standing, with the exception of Hut 9 which is to be preserved and is now

securely boarded and fenced off, although the tunnel exit in the field is still visible.

'The camp is now to be developed in conjunction with the Welsh Development Agency as part of the nearby science and technology park. Hut 9 is to be restored to "as left in 1948 condition". Many of the fittings, i.e. lights, doors, frames, windows, plumbing and sanitary ware, have been salvaged from the demolished huts for re-use in Hut 9.'



Len found evidence of another tunnel entrance in the ablutions of Hut 21: left as found and right after rubble removal.



In the news in rather different circumstances. Left: Former double agent Eddie Chapman (issue 11) and (right) Peter

Dimond, prominent aviation wreckology enthusiast and also one of the founders of the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum.

It is interesting to see how some people who have featured in former stories sometimes later hit the headlines in totally different circumstances. Back in 1976, I featured the double agent Eddie Chapman whom I took back to the scene of one of his exploits. Now, 18 years later, he was included in the BBC1 series *The Underworld* as the first man to blow safes using gellignite. Then, in 1980, I included a picture of Peter Dimond on page 573 of *The Battle of Britain Then and Now* unearthing a bomb from a Ju 88, but in June 1993 he was pictured on page 14 of the *Daily Mail* in somewhat different circumstances: as the pilot who flew the fugitive businessman Asil Nadir to Cyprus!

The demise of communism has already fuelled a desire throughout eastern Europe to try to re-establish those social and cultural values which had been suppressed or destroyed since the countries lost their national identities at the end of the war. However, the reburial of ex-Regent Admiral Miklos Horthy, the leader in Hungary before and during the war, in September 1993 was carried out against a background of loud protests being voiced by Hungarian Jews. As an anti-communist, Horthy joined forces with Hitler, but his attempt to break away from Nazi Germany in 1944 resulted in Otto Skorzeny's Operation 'Panzerfaust' (issue 40). In the eyes of Hungarian Prime Minister Josef Antall, this made Horthy a patriot and, while stopping short of giving the Admiral a



Admiral Miklos Horthy, an avowed anti-communist, was elected regent of Hungary in 1920 although he thwarted the restoration of the monarchy. In 1941, Horthy joined forces with Hitler against the Soviet Union but Hungary suffered a crushing defeat in January 1943, he thereafter attempting to extricate his country from what was by then a lost cause. Admiral Horthy was taken into custody by the Allies, but was released in May 1945 into exile in Portugal, where he died in February 1957.

full state funeral, the government did give their support to his reburial in his ancestral

tomb in the village of Kenderes on September 4, 1993.



September 1993. Left: Members of the Hungarian Seamen's Association assist at the reburial of Horthy. Right: His daughter-in-law ecstatic at the family crypt. (ANP)



In 1981, the centenary of the birth of General Sikorski, the Polish leader killed in an air crash at Gibraltar in July 1943 (issues 20 and 24), led to representations being made to the British authorities by the government in Poland for the repatriation of the General's remains from Newark Cemetery in Nottinghamshire. While the request to bury the fiercely anti-communist Sikorski in his native land was declared as a symbol of the new mood of national unity, it was seen by Polish émigrés in Britain as a political move to endorse the new government which they still saw as communist-dominated. Their view was that the General's remains should never be returned to Poland while the country was under the domination of the Soviet Union which partitioned it in league with Nazi Germany.

The British Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, dodged giving a definite refusal, saying that he needed time to consider all aspects of the matter, and even the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr Czyrek, was reported as discreetly suggesting that, if the answer was 'No', the formal decision should be postponed.



The 50-year resting place of General Wladyslaw Sikorski at Newark Cemetery. His remains were transferred to Poland in September 1993 with full military honours.



There the matter rested until 1990 when a new request was made by the Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, for the

return of the remains in accordance with General Sikorski's wishes that he be buried in a free Poland. With the collapse of the communist system throughout Europe, there now appeared to be no major obstacle to granting the request, although a Solidarity spokesman said that more time would be necessary to organise things so that a dignified transfer could take place. However, in the official Ministry of Defence press release of September 1993, it was claimed that the repatriation scheduled for Tuesday, September 14, followed 'a request from President Walesa of Poland to the Prime Minister [John Major] in July this year'.

On September 13, the grave in the military section of the cemetery at Newark was opened and the remains transferred by hearse to St Mary Magdalene church in Newark where Polish ex-servicemen maintained a vigil as hundreds of Poles who fought under Sikorski filed past to pay their last respects.

The following day, a Requiem Mass attended by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was held before the coffin was moved to RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, where a Polish Tupolev TU154 was standing by. After the coffin was ceremonially carried to the aircraft by an RAF bearer party, the aircraft was escorted to the edge of British airspace by two RAF F3 Tornados.

On arrival at the Okęcie military airfield in Warsaw, the coffin was taken to lie in state in St John's Cathedral. Then, having been transferred to Krakow in southern Poland, on September 17 Sikorski was re-interred in a specially-prepared tomb in the crypt of

Wawel Cathedral which lies inside the walls of the ancient castle, traditional burial place of the Polish kings.



President Lech Walesa led the service in Poland at which the United Kingdom was represented by Prince Philip.



The empty grave. Sikorski's widow declared that her husband should only return when Poland was again free.



Perseverance pays off. Refusing to give up, Peter Thompson followed the quest to track down the grave of Major Hans Scheller, executed for his failure to prevent the capture of the

bridge at Remagen. Peter drove right across Germany to establish that the trail ended here, east of the Rhine, just four kilometres north-west of Altenkirchen.

It is thanks to Peter Thompson of Halifax that we can clarify one important aspect of the Remagen bridge story, recounted in issue 16. Shortly before we went to press in May 1977, I received a reply from the German War Graves Commission about the location of Major Scheller's grave and I included this information in one of the captions in the associated story on the making of the film *The Bridge at Remagen*. However, the location given was incorrect and it sent Peter on a wild goose chase as he explained to us in his letter of June 1993:

'You will recall that in May 1990 you sent me a map showing the location of Birnbach cemetery near the Austrian-German border where Major Scheller was buried as mentioned in ATB 16, page 45. On our visit in 1990, we failed to find the grave and you then sent us a photocopy of the letter you received from the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge back in 1977. In Febru-

ary 1991, you kindly sent a translation of the reply I had received from the VDK in which they could not understand how we had not found the grave.

'My wife and I have just returned from a three-week car tour of the First World War Austro-Hungarian battlefields in the River Isonzo region. After visiting Salzburg on the return journey, we decided to go to Birnbach once again. We found the old church and the cemetery which is situated some way above the church. We looked at every grave again but still to no avail. It was a Sunday and a christening had been taking place in the church, so we approached several people as they were leaving including the minister, but still without any success. We were told that the secretary who would know was away in Vienna but would be back the following day. One gentleman even suggested there may be another Birnbach between Passau and the Czechoslovakian frontier!

'We returned to our car somewhat dejected and had a picnic lunch washed down with Italian wine and took stock of the situation. Michelin Map 413 showed a Birnbach south of Regensburg, but then we started to reason why should Major Scheller be buried so far away from where he had been executed? A consultation of Michelin Map 412 revealed yet another Birnbach (Kreis Altenkirchen) some 30 miles north-east of Remagen.

'We do not like to be beaten! A command decision was taken to alter our plans and drive 400 miles to this new location. We found the cemetery and, more important, we found the memorial gravestone commemorating Major Scheller and also Major Strobel, Major Kraft and Oberleutnant Peters among the 52 war graves.

'Feeling very elated, we then visited Oberirschen and then Rimbach where he was executed and found a memorial stone on display in the village.'



The 'Saint' with two graves. Sergeant John Ellis crashed at Chelsfield, near Orpington, Kent, on September 1, 1940. An RAF salvage team recovered parts of a body, though with no identification, on September 22, and a civilian recovery team clearing the wreckage found more the following day. These are said to have been buried in St Mary Cray Cemetery as those of an unknown airman (left) although the dates on the two headstones — September 11 and October 12 — do not appear to

bear this out. Fifty-two years later, further human remains were uncovered by Mark Kirby, also wreckage bearing P2673 linking the Chelsfield crash site to Sergeant Ellis. The Coroner was minded to order the exhumation of the 1940 grave but deferred to the wishes of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission not to have it disturbed. The 1992 remains were buried at Brookwood (right) but, at the time of writing, the grave still awaits its formal CWGC headstone.



Just down the road from Brookwood, another grave . . . another age. Lieutenant Edgar Anstey of the 1st Battalion, 24th Regiment, is the only casualty from the battle of Isandlwana buried in England (see *The Zulu War Then and Now*). His remains were recovered by his brother in 1879 and brought home to St John's Churchyard, Woking but, by 1993, when we put the book together, we found the grave had been vandalised.

The month following the arrival of Peter's letter to me saw the end of another 'grave' mystery although this one was much nearer home.

In *The Battle of Britain Then and Now*, we listed under September 1, 1940, the loss of a No. 79 Squadron Hurricane L2602 flown by Pilot Officer Brian Noble who was wounded and admitted to hospital. However, because human remains were found in the wreckage later that month by both the RAF and a civilian salvage team, we linked the loss with that of Sergeant John Ellis of No. 85 Squadron as he was the only pilot unaccounted for on that day. It was believed that the two sets of remains were buried in 1940 in St Mary Cray Cemetery as those of an unknown airman.

Over the years, the crash site was investigated at least twice by aircraft archaeologists, but it was not until Mark Kirby excavated the spot again in October 1992 that evidence was found linking it to P2673, the Hurricane

being flown by Sergeant Ellis. As more human remains were uncovered, the case had to be referred to the Coroner who, after many months of investigation, ruled in July 1993 that they were those of John Ellis.

The RAF agreed to bury these with full military honours — but at Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey — leaving the bizarre situation of poor John being buried in more than one grave! On October 1, the Central Band of the Royal Air Force led the burial party from the Queen's Colour Squadron.

Two months earlier, members of the squadron had been present in Russia to officiate at the burial of another RAF crew missing for more than 50 years. It was in September 1942 that Hampden AT138 of No. 144 Squadron was shot down close to the village of Alekurti near Lake Vikurij on the Soviet-Finnish frontier. At the time, the sole survivor, Flight Sergeant John Bray, was told by the Germans that they had given his



A great-great-nephew, Patrick McGrath, was equally upset so we joined forces to have an inscription added to the column. In a simple yet moving ceremony on June 22, 1994, it was dedicated in the presence of the family, the service being conducted by the ex-padre of the Irish Guards, the Last Post being sounded by Sergeant Major Coomer of the Royal Regiment of Wales — successor to the old 24th Regiment.

fellow crewmen a military funeral but, in fact, the bodies had been left in the wreck. In 1991, the wreckage was spotted by a Russian aircraft and the remains recovered and taken to Murmansk. They were inspected by officials from the British Embassy and the wheels set in motion to try to identify them.

The main clue was a signet ring engraved with the initials 'LM' which was subsequently traced to having belonged to Airman Leslie Malinson who had volunteered to go with the squadron to help service the aircraft. This helped the RAF's Personnel Management Centre at Innsworth, Gloucestershire, to trace relatives of all four airmen previously listed as missing on the Air Force Memorial at Runnymede — in addition to Malinson: Pilot Officer John Smith (navigator); Flight Sergeant George Kirkby (wireless operator), and Sergeant Roy Otter (air gunner) — so that they could attend the funeral at the Allied Cemetery at Archangel.







DWIGHT
DAVID
EISENHOWER



1890-1969

AFTER THE BATTLE

CRIME IN WWII



There are many untold stories of World War II, untold that is apart from in the official records, those dusty files hidden under an avalanche of everyday reporting of the myriad of activities carried out by an army at war. Two months ago, the honorable side of waging war was commemorated in Normandy by the victorious nations. On such occasions, the down side is hidden by the bands and the flag-waving; people did not really want to know about the thousands of French civilians killed (more than the Allies lost on D-Day); the killing of prisoners, suppressed in the unit histories or perhaps obliquely referred to as 'mopping up'; or criminal acts committed against the civilian population.

Unfortunately, it is still not possible to present a balanced view, either because people just do not want to believe that some British, Canadian or American soldiers committed improprieties, or because the records — certainly as far as Britain is concerned — are still closed from public view. The defeated enemy has his cupboard laid bare; the victors cover their tracks.

Fortunately, one nation makes her records freely available to researchers but it must not be inferred that just because the crimes described here were perpetrated by US servicemen, only American soldiers were guilty of such acts. British reticence to release records or information of a 'sensitive' nature is well known, and although the 21st Army Group administrative history does give broad totals of crimes committed by men under its command (some 10,000 court-martial for all offences by May 1945), no details are given, and we are unlikely to be able to consult the appropriate records until well into the 21st century.

As far as rape was concerned, in its post-war report the US Judge Advocate General said the offences fell into three broad categories: the British phase in England (see *After the Battle* No. 59); the French after D-Day, followed by the German:

'The French phase began on D-Day, and with it came a new series of factors that molded new rape patterns. The war was now on in deadly earnestness. From a land of law and order, the soldiers of the invading army suddenly landed in a country for four years

NORMANDY EXECUTIONS

occupied by their enemy, hurled back by the weight of overwhelming military might. The French people welcomed their liberators, often giving them drink to show their appreciation. They spoke a strange tongue. The invading soldiers came fully armed. The people were grateful, but they had little or no protection. Many soldiers had the notion that French women generally were both attractive and free with their love. At any rate, whatever the operative factors, the number

of violent sex crimes enormously increased with the arrival of our troops in France.

'Generally speaking, the rape cases of the French phase fell into one broad pattern characterized by violence, though of different degrees. The use of firearms was common in perpetrating the offense. Oftentimes, the hospitality of the host was grossly violated. Usually the attacker had been drinking, the name of 'Calvados' appearing with regularity in the records from Normandy.'



Top: The initial assault phase over, the battle has moved inland, leaving the civilian population to count its own cost in homes destroyed and lives lost. It was all part of the price which had to be paid yet there was an additional burden and those that had to bear it were usually women. Since time began, all conquering armies have been the same and, in a situation where life is cheap, it is inevitable that some soldiers will press their demands with violence. **Above:** We can imagine the scene as a farmhouse is approached and searched for the spoils of war.

The first rape case coming from Normandy illustrates the violence that was usually to accompany the rapes committed in France. It was the case of Court-Martial ETO 3141, Whitfield.

Vierville-sur-Mer lays just behind Omaha, right at the junction of Charlie and Dog Beaches at the head of the valley from the sea known as the D-1 exit. On D-Day, this lay within the assault area of the 116th Regimental Combat Team where its Company A suffered grievously. However, within a week, the front line had moved some 15 miles inland, when, on the evening of June 14, Private Clarence Whitfield of the 240th Port Company (494th Port Battalion), in the company of three other soldiers, accosted two Polish farm girls as they were pulling a cart towards the field where they were going to milk their cows. The soldiers pushed the wagon into the field and then asked the girls, Aniela Skrzyniarz and her sister, Zofia, if they could have some milk. Aniela began to milk one cow while Zofia went into the adjoining field to round up more cows.

All the men had been drinking and made advances towards the girls. From the testimony introduced into court, it appears that both were taken against their will but, in the case of Aniela, she was threatened directly with a rifle, a shot actually being fired, before she submitted. Whitfield's rifle was 'laying right alongside' all the time, she said. On hearing the shot from the next field, Zofia jumped up and ran home to fetch Aniela's husband. Returning in a Jeep with three officers of the 3704th Quartermaster Truck Company, they found Whitfield struggling with Aniela over the rifle. Her husband struck the soldier who was then taken before his battalion commander.

The US First Army was obviously mindful of establishing good relations with the local population and concerned with maintaining discipline with its second line, follow-up troops. Perhaps the fact that Private Whitfield was black also played its part in the hasty convening of a General Court-Martial. This was held at Vierville on June 20 at which he was found guilty and sentenced to death. The case was reviewed by the Judge Advocate General in Britain; legal case law was consulted and the findings of previous court-martials quoted to show that 'acquiescence through fear is not consent'.

The findings of the court-martial were confirmed on July 24, and on August 12 the sentence was ordered to be carried out. Gallows were erected in the kitchen garden of the château at Canisy, five kilometres southwest from St Lô, and the execution performed on the 14th.



Each court-martial designated the manner of death to be suffered, whether by musketry or hanging, although the firing squad was only invoked by US forces in the ETO five times: Private Alex Miranda shot on May 30, 1944 and Private Benjamin Pygate on November 28, 1944 at the 2912th Disciplinary Training Center in England (see *After the Battle* No. 59);

Branch Office of The Judge Advocate General
with the
European Theater of Operations
APO 871

(351)

BOARD OF REVIEW

ZTO 3141

27 JUL 1944

UNITED STATES

v.

Private CLARENCE WHITFIELD
(34672443), 240th Port Com-
pany, 494th Port Battalion,
Transportation Corps.

FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY

Trial by GCM, convened at
Chateau Siml, Vierville
Sur Mer, France, 20 June
1944. Sentence: To be
hanged by the neck until
dead.

HOLDING by the BOARD OF REVIEW
RITER, SARGENT and STEVENS, Judge Advocates

1. The record of trial in the case of the soldier named above has been examined by the Board of Review and the Board submits this, its holding, to the Assistant Judge Advocate General in charge of the Branch Office of The Judge Advocate General with the European Theater of Operations.

2. Accused was tried upon the following Charge and Specification:

CHARGE: Violation of the 92nd Article of War.
Specification: In that Private Clarence (NMI)
Whitfield, Two-hundred Fortieth Port Com-
pany, did, at Vierville Sur Mer, France,
on or about 1830, 14 June 1944, forcibly
and feloniously, against her will, have
carnal knowledge of Aniela Skrzyniarz.

He pleaded not guilty to and, all members of the court present when the vote was taken concurring, was found guilty of the Charge and Specification. Evidence was introduced of four previous convictions, three by summary court: one for absence without leave from place of organization, another for absence without leave from detail and the third for absence without leave for 15 hours; and one by special court-martial for absence without leave for nine hours; all in violation of Article of War 61. All members of the court present when the vote was taken: concurring, he was sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead.

The first Allied soldier convicted of rape to be executed on the Normandy battlefield was Private Clarence Whitfield. Guards were posted at each shell hole in the wall surrounding the château and the execution was only witnessed by one civilian, M. Aimable Lehoux. According to his recollection Whitfield was brought in the day before to help dig a pit beneath the gallows. He went to his death smoking a cigar.



Private Eddie Slovik at St Marie-aux-Mines on January 31, 1945 (see *After the Battle* No. 32), and Privates Woodrow Parker and Sidney Bennerman at Les Milles on October 15, 1945. Above: We visited the execution site of Private Whitfield early one morning, the gloom adding to the atmosphere at the mist-shrouded château.



Court-Martial 293448 (ETO 5584) United States v. Private Waiters Yancy. Prosecution Exhibit A (left) shows the road and side view of the house of Auguste Mace where the shooting occurred on August 1, 1944. Right: When we visited Hameau-



Pigeon we were faced with the same problem as had the scene of crime photographer in 1944: namely, the sun right in the lens of the camera. We therefore took a reverse comparison looking back up the road towards the farm gate.

At 8.45 p.m. (French time) on August 1, 1944, Private Waiters Yancy, of the 1511th Engineer Water Supply Company, and Private Robert L. Skinner, of the same unit bivouaced at Bricquebec, had gone to the home of Monsieur Xavier Hébert at Hameau-Pigeon (about four kilometres west of the camp), where Marie Osouf, aged 19, was employed as a housemaid. They demanded, received and consumed five glasses of cider. They left but returned in a few minutes and asked for more. Marie went to the cider shed to obtain the beverage and was there seized by one of the soldiers. She was thrown to the floor, struck several blows on the head and dragged into the courtyard. When she screamed, Skinner released his hold on her and she fled along the road. During this time, Yancy pointed his carbine at Madame Renée Hébert. She grabbed his carbine and fled but was soon caught and knocked down. She dropped the gun and ran to the home of a neighbour, Auguste Mace. Yancy caught up with Madame Hébert on the doorstep and fired at Mace, wounding him in the arm.

Hearing her cries, her husband, Xavier, who was working nearby with a farm labourer, Auguste Lebarillier, rushed to her aid but, as they reached the neighbour's house, shots were fired at them. Lebarillier fell, hit in the stomach, and Xavier in the back as he turned to enter the courtyard. Yancy then struck him with his carbine, breaking both the weapon and Monsieur Hébert's arm.

At this point, both soldiers, one of whom threatened her with a knife, dragged Marie into a field. Each engaged in sexual intercourse and while each was in the act, the other stood guard with the carbine at the gate.

The wounded men and Marie were not taken to the 101st Evacuation Hospital until the following morning by which time Lebarillier's wound had become gangrenous and he died soon after an emergency operation (although his headstone gives the date of death as August 1).

The General Courts-Martial (Skinner ETO 5363 and Yancy ETO 5584), convened at Cherbourg on November 7, lasted two days. Skinner was charged, in the words of the indictment, that he did 'forcibly and feloniously, against her will' have 'carnal knowledge of Miss Marie R. Osouf', as was Yancy who was additionally charged with killing Auguste Lebarillier and assaulting all three individuals. Both men were sentenced to be hanged, but held in prison until final approval for their execution was given in January 1945.



A better comparison this time for Prosecution Exhibit B: 'the house of Auguste Mace'. Monsieur Lebarillier was shot in the open gateway; Marie raped in the field on the left. The Hébert house stands on the right.





Early on February 10, some twenty French witnesses were brought by Jeeps to a field just outside Hameau-Pigeon. They included the Lebarillier family, the Mace family (the neighbour), Marie and her parents, and Monsieur and Madame Hébert. A raised gallows had been set up at the end of the field where hundreds of black soldiers were drawn up, guarded by a large number of military police. Villagers from Bricquebec who tried to approach and see what was happening were chased away by some of the MPs firing their weapons in the air.

As the two men stood on the scaffold, the long indictment and sentence was read out in both English and French. Immediately the execution was over, the local people were taken back to their homes and the gallows dismantled.

In all, 49 American servicemen were hanged for various crimes committed on French soil after D-Day. In the European Theater of Operations as a whole, 70 soldiers, all enlisted men, had been executed up to October 31, 1945. Of this total, 15 were white and 55 coloured. The original number of those sentenced to death was much higher at 443, broken down as 245 white and 198 coloured. Thus, although 55 per cent of those receiving the death sentence were white, only 21 per cent of these sentences were actually carried out, but of the 45 per cent coloured soldiers found guilty, 79 per cent were executed.

Left: We were fortunate that Monsieur Xavier Hébert was still alive and living in Hameau-Pigeon. He was able to point out where each event took place and he also took us to the place of execution: La Ferme des Galeries (right).



The gallows had been constructed just inside the gate to the field. Monsieur Hébert explained that because they used the 'western' style of hanging (where the victim is strangled rather than having his neck suddenly broken), the first soldier took six minutes to die, watched all the time by the second man waiting his turn.

The total number of civilians murdered by US troops in the ETO was 109, plus 214 American servicemen and 107 German

nationals. There were 181 rapes that resulted in a court-martial in France and 552 in Germany with a sharp drop noted as of VE-Day.



Procedure for Military Executions, Execution by Hanging, Section III, Paragraph 17a: 'The officer charged with the execution will face the prisoner and read aloud to him the charge, finding, sentence and orders. He will then notify the chaplain and the prisoner that a brief time will be allowed the prisoner for any last statement. After a reasonable time he will have the sergeant from the main guard place the hood over the prisoner's head and bind his ankles. The sergeant of the execution party will then adjust the noose around the prisoner's neck.

The sergeant of the execution party will then place himself in position at the trigger and, upon a signal from the officer charged with the execution, will spring the trap. The officer charged with the execution and the medical officer will then examine the body for time of death.' *Left: As the shadows lengthened, your Editor could not resist staging one final symbolic photograph. Right: 'A la mémoire d'Auguste Lebarillier né le 6.6.1925. Victime civile de la guerre, le 1.8.1944.'* A picture kindly supplied to us by his brother.



THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY PLAQUES PROJECT

Dr Ross Bastiaan is a periodontist in specialist private practice in Melbourne who has been involved over the past five years in the construction of over 75 bronze information plaques around different parts of the world. These are designed to inform current and future generations of significant military events involving Australia and its Allies during both the First and Second World Wars.

The original concept was developed by Ross Bastiaan in 1987 after he visited Gallipoli (Turkey) to research work for a book he wrote conjointly with Peter Pedersen called *Images of Gallipoli*. When walking the old battlefield of Anzac, he noted a singular lack of information for English-speaking people which could lead to future generations not understanding the significance of the area.

After three years of negotiations with the Turkish government, he positioned ten 52kg bronze plaques (840mm by 770mm) at significant sites around the Gallipoli battlefield. The text was written in conjunction with the Turkish military and related directly to the historical importance of the immediate area around each plaque. On each plaque there were a hundred words of text in English, Turkish, German and French. The project was unveiled by the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr R. J. Hawke, at Lone Pine, Anzac, Turkey, on April 25, 1990.

'A personal crusade' is the only way to describe Dr Ross Bastiaan's laudable project to record, in tables of bronze, the exploits of Australians in two world wars. Above: Kokoda village, Papua New Guinea; right Fromelles, France.

Dr Bastiaan was then invited by the Returned and Services League of Australia and the New Zealand Services Association to construct four more bronze plaques to commemorate the battles of northern Greece and Crete in 1941 (see *After the Battle* No. 47). Dr Bastiaan sculpted in putty

By Dr Ross J. Bastiaan, OAM

a relief map of Crete and, around the corners, provided text in Greek and English of the battles of northern Greece, the battle of Crete and the evacuation of Crete.



Then, in 1990, he was approached by veterans of the Second World War captured by the Japanese to place bronze information plaques in Singapore and Thailand in order that the story of their captivity was preserved. Dr Bastiaan arranged, with the assistance of the Singapore government, to place a bronze plaque at Changi Prison (see *After the Battle* Nos. 31 and 35) and Kranji Commonwealth War Cemetery, Singapore, to be unveiled on February 15, 1992. In Singapore, the Changi plaque shows a relief map of the Changi Peninsula and a sculptured replica of Changi prison while the text highlights the main events in the PoW story from 1942 to 1945. On the Kranji plaque, the battle for Singapore is described with a diagram of the island and appropriate text.

In Thailand, plaques have been erected at the Bridge on the River Kwai, Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Nam Tok (end of today's railway) and the Australian Railway Memorial at Hellfire Pass. (See *After the Battle* No. 26.) These plaques describe the story of the railway and the suffering of so many. Centrally, a relief map shows the path of the railway through Thailand and Burma.

The aim of all these plaques is to provide information for those who come in the future to these areas. Text has been made clear and precise with no bias towards any one nation. They have all been placed with the assistance of the nations involved and the support of the veterans' groups of all countries.

On October 23, 1992, Dr Bastiaan flew with the Royal Australian Air Force and over one tonne of bronze to Papua New Guinea to complete a plaque series to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Kokoda Trail and Buna-Buna battles. He was asked to do this series in his official capacity as a serving Army reserve Colonel in the Royal Australian Army Dental Corps by General Peter Gratton, Chief of the Australian Defence Force. The Kokoda project involved five one-metre-square bronze works weighing 100kg each and eight smaller plaques located at historically significant sites in the jungle on the Kokoda Trail and at Buna-Gona. The large plaques have a central sculpture of the Kokoda Trail in full relief and text about the battle in Pidgin and English. Each plaque carries text about the immediate area and they are located at Bomana War Cemetery, Segari (start of the trail), Popondetta, Kokoda and Port Moresby. The smaller plaques describe battles in the immediate area.



His first bronze was erected at Anzac Cove in Turkey, one of ten plaques (in English, French, German and Turkish) to provide unbiased information of the events of 1915-16 at significant spots around the three-kilometre perimeter of the old Gallipoli battlefield. Ari-Burnu (landing), Anzac Cove, Shrapnel Valley, Shell Green, Lone Pine, Courtney's Post, Quinn's Post, The Nek, Chunuk Bair and Hill 971. The total cost was \$55,000 (Australian) which Ross raised from seven sponsors: BHP, Wormald and AMP (two plaques each), and one each from Coca-Cola/Amatil, Qantas, the ANZ Bank and John Allison Monkhouse.



To tell the prisoner-of-war story on the Changi Peninsula, five plaques were installed: outside the main gate of the prison (left); outside Changi Museum; at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Kranji (right), and two at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Sponsors in this case were Barclays Bank, Swiss International Underwriting Insurers, and Arrow Engraving & Foundry.





Five bronzes have been installed on three-tonne concrete plinths along the Burma-Thailand railway; at the bridge over the River Kwai (left); Hellfire Pass (right) where the plaque was unveiled appropriately by an ex-PoW, Bill Toon; Nam Tok



railway station; CWGC cemeteries at Kanchanaburi (Thailand) and Thanbyuzayat (Burma); and at the War Memorial in Canberra and the Imperial War Museum in London. The A\$20,000 cost was shared between three sponsors.

Complementing the Kokoda plaque project, Dr Bastiaan made a one-metre-square bronze (95kg) with a map of Milne Bay with text about the battle of August 1942. The plaques are located at the capital Alota, Gurney airport, and the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

Copies of most plaques are on display at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and individual plaques are located in the House of Commons, and the Imperial War Museum, London; the New Zealand National War Memorial, Wellington; the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne; and the Anzac Museum, Turkey.

Ross Bastiaan has undertaken these projects on a purely private basis, remaining completely independent of any governments or national organisations. His work has been at all times voluntary and, in order to maintain his impartiality and independence, he has raised sponsorship from many large companies, in Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Thailand, Belgium, France and Papua New Guinea. The nations of Greece and Singapore have provided invaluable support in the construction of three-tonne concrete plinths to support the plaques.

The plaques in these many distant lands stand as a permanent reminder to the generations that follow of a period in Australia's history of great sacrifice, courage and endeavour. If future Australians read them with pride, then all of this work will have been worthwhile.



The author and architect of it all at the Menin Gate. Dr Bastiaan's incredible solo initiative now spans the world; from the battlefields of Passchendaele in Belgium (below left) to the mountains of northern Greece at Thermopylae (below right).





THE SEARCH FOR 'BLUE PETER'

By Ralph J. Davidson

On May 23, 1942, *Blue Peter*, a Spitfire Vb presented to the nation by the people of Newmarket, took off from RAF Ayr at 1 p.m. to provide cover for the *Queen Mary* on her approach to the Clyde estuary with one of the first contingents of US troops to arrive in mainland Britain. At the controls of AD540 was Pilot Officer David Hunter Blair, a Scot from Ayrshire, who had only recently completed his flying training, and who had left No. 61 OTU (Operational Training Unit) early the previous month. He had been posted to No. 242 Squadron, newly-reformed and based at RAF Turnhouse, Edinburgh, B Flight being then transferred to RAF Ayr.

Service life at Ayr for the 19-year-old Hunter Blair had been the usual routine of instrument checks, gun-firing exercises, and test flights, until that dark, stormy day in May 1942 when he took off to escort the *Queen Mary*, accompanied by his No. 2, Flight Sergeant Gordon 'Matt' Mathers. No sooner had they taken off and reached their operational height over the Clyde estuary of 20,000 feet, than they were suddenly vectored inland to investigate a supposed sighting of an enemy aircraft. Whilst flying to these co-ordinates, Flight Sergeant Mathers noticed that his leader was flying erratically and he was forced to break away to avoid a possible collision. As he pulled away, *Blue Peter* disappeared into the storm clouds below on a fateful plunge earthwards, carrying with it its now unconscious pilot, oxygen failure being the possible and most likely cause. However, Pilot Officer Hunter Blair must have regained consciousness when the aircraft reached a lower altitude, but in his desperate struggle to regain control of the

aircraft, the wing-tips sheared at the ailerons. It was probably at this point then that he attempted to bale out of the doomed aircraft, unfortunately too late for his parachute to deploy sufficiently. He died less than half a

mile from where *Blue Peter* finally came to earth on a bleak Scottish mountainside over half a century ago



This picture from the family scrapbook shows Pilot Officer David Hunter Blair at the controls of his Spitfire. It would be nice to think that this is *Blue Peter*, but that aircraft is known to have been coded 'R' for Robert and the letter shown here is obviously a 'Z'.

Newmarket Spitfire Fund.

Col. Moore-Brabazon, Minister of Aircraft Production, has written as follows to the Hon. George Lambton, President of the Newmarket Spitfire Fund:

Dear Lambton,

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the handsome gift of £5,000, which you have forwarded to me on behalf of the Newmarket and Racing Industry Spitfire Fund. I should like you to convey my warmest thanks to all who have helped to raise this splendid total. Their generosity in the time of difficulty through which you are passing is a proof of the universal determination to do the utmost to achieve victory. I promise you that in due course a Spitfire named "Blue Peter" will go into service to commemorate this gift.

Yours sincerely,

J. T. C. MOORE-BRABAZON.

The final death throes of *Blue Peter* were witnessed by another 19-year-old, Jim McGarva, a farm worker who was digging drainage ditches in the remote valley of Cairnsmore of Carsphairn. He heard the sound of an aircraft which suddenly appeared through the storm clouds. In a flat spin, the Spitfire gently buried itself into the soft peat soil. After Jim's initial shock, he began to run in the direction of the crash which was about half a mile away, and upon reaching the wreckage he saw that the fighter had in fact landed relatively intact, save that it was lying on its back with its tail pointing skywards.

Although the Spitfire had not caught fire, as Jim looked back towards the area where he had been working, he saw what he at first thought to be smoke on the nearby Dugland Hill. He began to run back but, as he approached the 'smoke', he saw that in fact it was a parachute blowing in the wind. As he reached the pilot's prone body, he realised that there was nothing he could do, so, after cutting the body free from its harness and covering it with the parachute, he ran the three miles to where he had parked his motorcycle and summoned help from St John's of Dalry.

Meanwhile, back at RAF Ayr, Squadron Leader Bill Parker was preparing to take off in Spitfire BL895, accompanied by Flight



As an additional means of raising money for the wartime Exchequer, bomber or fighter aircraft could be sponsored by individuals, organisations or towns for a fixed sum, the figure agreed for a single-seat fighter being £5,000 although this was far less than the actual cost of production: engine £2,000, fuselage £2,500, wings £1,800, undercarriage £800, guns £800, aircrew £350, tail £500, petrol tank (top) £40, (bottom) £25, etc. Fund-raising events were held, donations solicited, and the sponsored aircraft eventually bore its chosen name, usually in yellow lettering on the engine cowling. In 1941, the Hon. George Lambton, President of the Newmarket and Racing Industry Spitfire Fund, sent off their donation of £5,100 to the Minister of Aircraft Production, the additional £100 being sent by the Mayor of Newmarket in Ontario. The name chosen to adorn the Newmarket Spitfire was *Blue Peter*, after the chestnut colt born in April 1936 at Lord Rosebery's stable at Newmarket, and winner of the Derby in May 1939 ridden by Eph Smith (above). The war put paid to a potentially exceptional racing career and *Blue Peter* was retired to stud, dying in 1957. (S&G)

Lieutenant Douglas Benham in BL594 in response to the news that AD540 was missing. At 2.05 p.m., both aircraft took off, but after a sweep search in the aircraft's last reported position, and with worsening weather conditions, they were forced to return, landing back at base 45 minutes later. However, Jim McGarva's telephone call

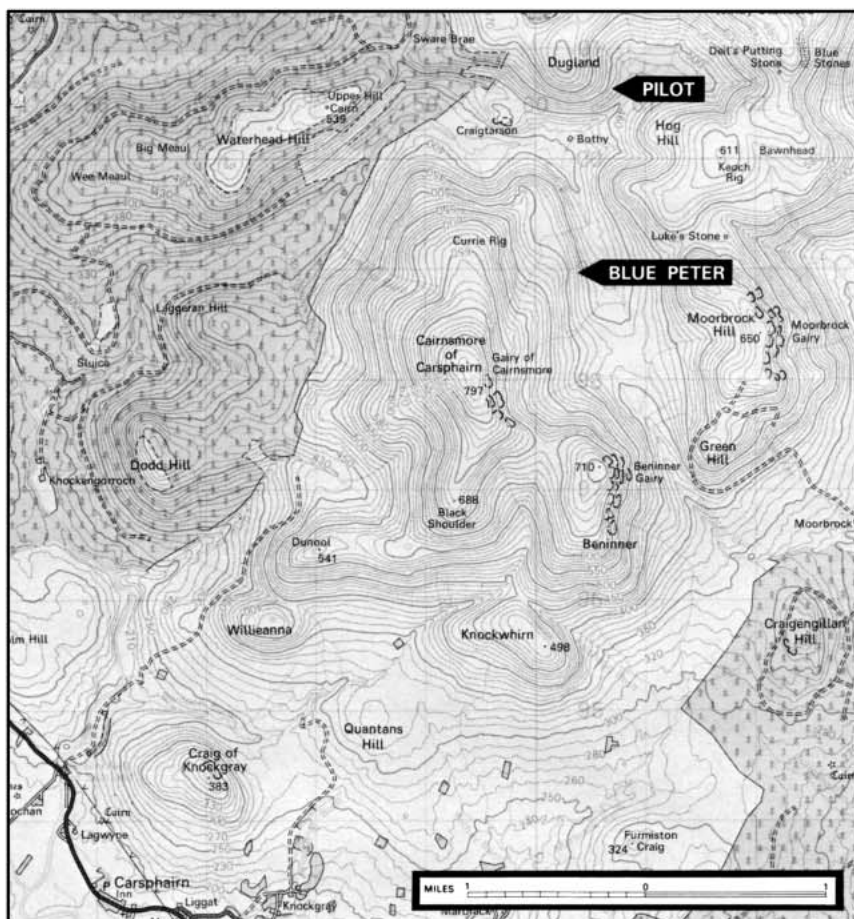
from Dalry to the local police was soon relayed to the RAF, although it was still some hours before personnel reached the totally remote and practically inaccessible crash site. David Hunter Blair was buried on May 26 with full military honours on the family estate of Blairquhan Castle just 15 miles from where he had been killed.



Left: David, pictured with his mother, Lady Hunter Blair, and younger brother James, at the family seat, Blairquhan Castle at Straiton, ten miles south of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland.



Right: David was killed just 15 miles from home and, at the request of the family, he was laid to rest in the private burial ground on the estate.



Fifty years later, any connection with racehorses or aeroplanes had been long forgotten, and the name *Blue Peter* (in Britain at least) meant only one thing: the children's television programme put out by the BBC. When the producers were made aware of their wartime namesake, they were keen to feature the story of the Newmarket Spitfire and the brief career of its pilot. However, the next question was: exactly where did the aircraft crash and what, if anything, remained? Over the next nine months, the bleak landscape around Cairnmore of Carsphairn was combed in all weathers for any sign of wreckage.

At the time, the incident was just another tragedy of war and, as time passed, the remains of *Blue Peter*, which had been broken up and buried in situ, became part of those bleak mountains . . . lost and forgotten. Forgotten, that is, until Jake Wilson began reading *Spitfire The History* by Eric Morgan and Edward Shacklady, which includes a listing of every one of the 22,000-plus Spitfires built. He noticed that one Presentation Spitfire from the city of Newmarket was named *Blue Peter* after a famous racehorse of the period. Fifty years later, the name in Britain has a totally different connotation, being that of a long-time children's television programme. Jake wondered if the producers of *Blue Peter* knew of this co-incidence, therefore he subsequently contacted the BBC. They were not aware of the existence of their wartime namesake and it was decided that a 50th anniversary documentary should be made to honour, not only the loss of a legendary aircraft, but also the memory of its young pilot.

The BBC contacted The Spitfire Society, and here a strange quirk of fate intervened, as Group Captain David Green, founder of the society, had actually undertaken his basic training alongside David Hunter Blair in 1941 at No. 5 Initial Training Wing, Torquay; later at Tulsa and Miami, USA; at No. 1 Advanced Flying Unit, Ternhill; and, finally, at No. 61 OTU at Heston where they first flew Spitfires. They parted company in April 1942, David Green being posted to No. 132 Squadron at Skeabrae in the Orkneys, and David Hunter Blair to Ayr.

The Spitfire Society's archives expert, the late Tony White, was given the task of tracking down the history of *Blue Peter*. After collating all the recorded information, he

eventually contacted myself, being the Chairman (designate) of the Scottish Region of the society. I, in turn, spoke to Dave Reid, Chairman of the Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Group as they had previously recovered P7540, a Mk II Spitfire, from Loch Doon in 1983, and in September 1992 the search for *Blue Peter* began, led by myself. The BBC visited the area of the crash with the group, and made their initial documentary which was transmitted during September 1992 on the *Blue Peter* programme. This was very sensitively produced and followed not only the aircraft's brief history but also the short career of David Hunter Blair.

Meanwhile, the search continued to try to pinpoint the precise crash site but, as the days turned to weeks, and the weeks to months, there were no positive results. In the company of one or two associates, we carried on relentlessly searching on the bleak mountainsides through the change of the seasons and in all weather conditions. In the end, with no trace of any wreckage, we decided to contact the local media who ran an article appealing for witnesses of the tragic event.

It was at this stage that Jim McGarva contacted us and told us the sad tale of events he had witnessed on that day half a century before, but, due to a disabling illness, Jim could not come with us to the hills of Carsphairn to point out where AD540 had crashed. However, I showed him video footage which I had shot and he indicated where he found the pilot on Dugland Hill, and he also recognised the area where he thought the aircraft had come down on Cairnmore. At this point, a former shepherd, Tom Gordon from nearby Monieve, came forward and volunteered, at the grand old age of 73, to assist with the search, and on a cold, misty Remembrance Sunday in 1992, he took to the once-familiar hills again to try and locate the pieces of wreckage he had last seen in 1949. Unfortunately, the grey mist thwarted us once again and, after searching for a number of hours in gradually-worsening weather conditions, we had to call off the operation. However, before heading back to the lower slopes of the valley, we placed a small, simple wooden cross with a single poppy at a point Tom thought was close to his sighting in 1949. For a moment, the small party stood with their own respective thoughts before heading back to their vehicles.



The search was masterminded by Ralph Davidson (right), our author and the Chairman (designate) of the Scottish region of the Spitfire Society. He is also a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Group. With Ralph are the two helpers who were present when the first piece of evidence was found: Jim Bell (left), a former shepherd, and Colin Nicol.

Time passed with still no sign of *Blue Peter*, and enthusiasm waned, but I refused to give up. By this time, I had vowed I would carry on regardless until I found the remains of the aircraft. I was determined to persevere as a final fitting tribute to a brave young man and bring to a conclusion one small, sad part of the Second World War, this determination becoming even more unshakeable after I visited David Hunter Blair's grave.

On May 23, 1993, nine months after we began the search, I was accompanied by Colin Nicol, a local enthusiast, and Jim Bell, another former shepherd who had only come forward to help the previous week, when we came across a small piece of aluminium protruding about four inches from the rough turf. There then ensued a two-hour period of elation and joy as we uncovered piece after piece of *Blue Peter* but, having no tools with us, we had to scrape away the soil with iron stanchions from an old fence. Using these makeshift tools, we soon brought a five-foot section of the trailing edge of the port wing to the surface. As we examined the remains, it became clear that the aircraft had been broken up after the crash, some parts having been simply hacked off, others dismantled. Indeed, the lower mainspar bolts had been removed manually but the upper mainspar booms had broken away from the fuselage as the aircraft hit the hillside.

After burying the recovered remains once again, we made our weary way back to the car parked at the foot of the valley. It was only then, as we were driving back to Glasgow, that I suddenly realised that the date was May 23 — it was in fact exactly 51 years to the day that *Blue Peter* had crashed. An odd coincidence or Divine Providence? Whatever the circumstances, it brought its own special meaning to the discovery.



With many remote crash sites, it was the practice of the RAF salvage teams to bury any wreckage that was not worth recovering to avoid surface remains being reported again as a later crash. Thus it was fortunate that a small part of the five-foot section from the trailing edge of the port wing had been left protruding from the ground. Its discovery on May 23, 1993 — exactly 51 years from the day when *Blue Peter* came to grief — was providential.



The following week, now armed with spades, but in awful weather conditions, Ralph, Jim and Colin excitedly scraped at the peaty ground and began to uncover the remains of the port wing, cowl and engine buried by the maintenance unit in 1942. The only piece remaining from the instrument panel was this blue-painted fragment (above).



For the benefit of the BBC's *Blue Peter*, who wanted to film the discovery of the wreckage, everything had to be reburied again!



Fortunately choosing a fine day, June 6, the television team travelled to Scotland with programme presenter John Lesley to film the 'discovery' of the remains by members of the Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Group.

The BBC returned to film the 'discovery' and recovery of the wreckage. It was as the technicians had completed their filming and were disappearing in the distance on the long walk back to the vehicles, that an excited shout from one of the team members brought all eyes back to the large crater that now lay exposed on the hillside. The cause of the excitement was the discovery of one of the 20mm Hispano cannon magazines which still contained its full complement of ammunition. Further excavation within the crater revealed the second magazine with its cannon shells scattered about. We then uncovered the cannon itself, complete with one round still in the breech.

Below: One of the magazines for the 20mm Hispano cannon, complete with its 60 rounds.





On June 13, a second burial site was discovered some 200 yards away, lower down the valley. It revealed the cockpit section (left) and the remains of the oil tank (right) lying buried underneath the starboard wing.

Many weekends of work followed in recovering all the remains. With the aid of a metal detector, I found the shattered remains of *Blue Peter*'s cockpit section at a separate location some 200 yards down the valley. Other parts buried here were the starboard wing, oil tank, and the aircraft's lower fuel tank which had not exploded even though the engine had been forced back on impact. It appeared that the wartime recovery team had chosen the softer peaty ground at that location to bury these parts.

On July 12, 1993, the remains of AD540 were airlifted by a Sea King helicopter from No. 819 Squadron of HMS *Gannet* at Prestwick and deposited at a point near the A713 for transportation to the Dumfries and Galloway Museum in Dumfries. The whole operation was carried out in 1½ hours and consisted of three flights with wreckage followed by a final lift of the ¾-ton Merlin 45 engine; after 51 long and silent years, *Blue Peter* had once again taken to the skies over Cairnmore of Carsphairn! In all, 60 per cent of the aircraft was recovered — the remainder was probably salvaged and removed from the hillside in 1942.



The lower fuel tank, self-sealing in the event of being struck by a bullet, showing where it had been impacted by the engine.



As *Blue Peter* had crashed over three miles from the nearest road, help was sought from No. 819 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, based at Prestwick (just north of Ayr) for recovery of the

remains. The museum is located in the former RAF control tower at Heathall, Dumfries, previously home to No. 18 Maintenance Unit, and now part of the local industrial estate.

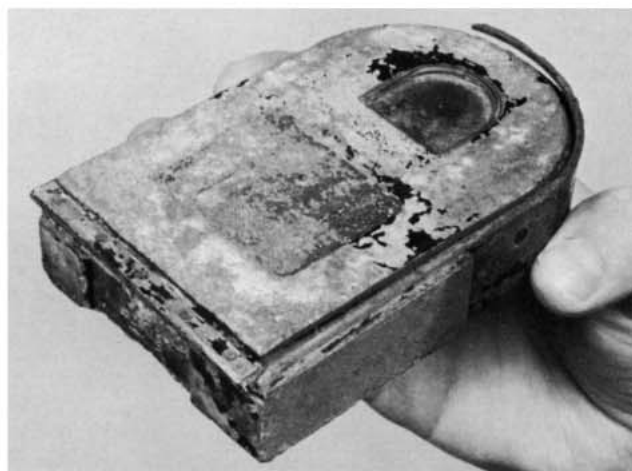
There now remained one more task to be accomplished: to erect a permanent memorial to Pilot Officer David Hunter Blair. Nature itself provided suitable rocks at both locations, so I decided to use two large granite rocks, one situated immediately behind the impact point, and the other on Dugland Hill where the pilot had been killed. It took four painstaking weekends to prepare the rocks for the memorial plaques to be attached, all the work being carried out by myself, Colin Nicol, and Walter McCrae, a local who supplied the tools, and also a lot of patience and dedication. The brass plaques were donated free by a Glasgow-based sheet metal company, Dust and Fume Systems Ltd, and the wording was inscribed free of charge on the plaques by another Glasgow firm, Colin Singh Trophies and Engravings. I then contacted the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at Coningsby who, at very short notice, agreed, weather permitting, to do a flypast of two Spitfires to coincide with the dedication of the memorial set for August 28, 1993.



From the drop-off point at Drumjohn on the A713, the remains were transported to the museum by road.



From a Merlin . . . to a magazine. The museum, where the remains of *Blue Peter* are now on display, is open every weekend from Easter to October. The gun camera magazine was

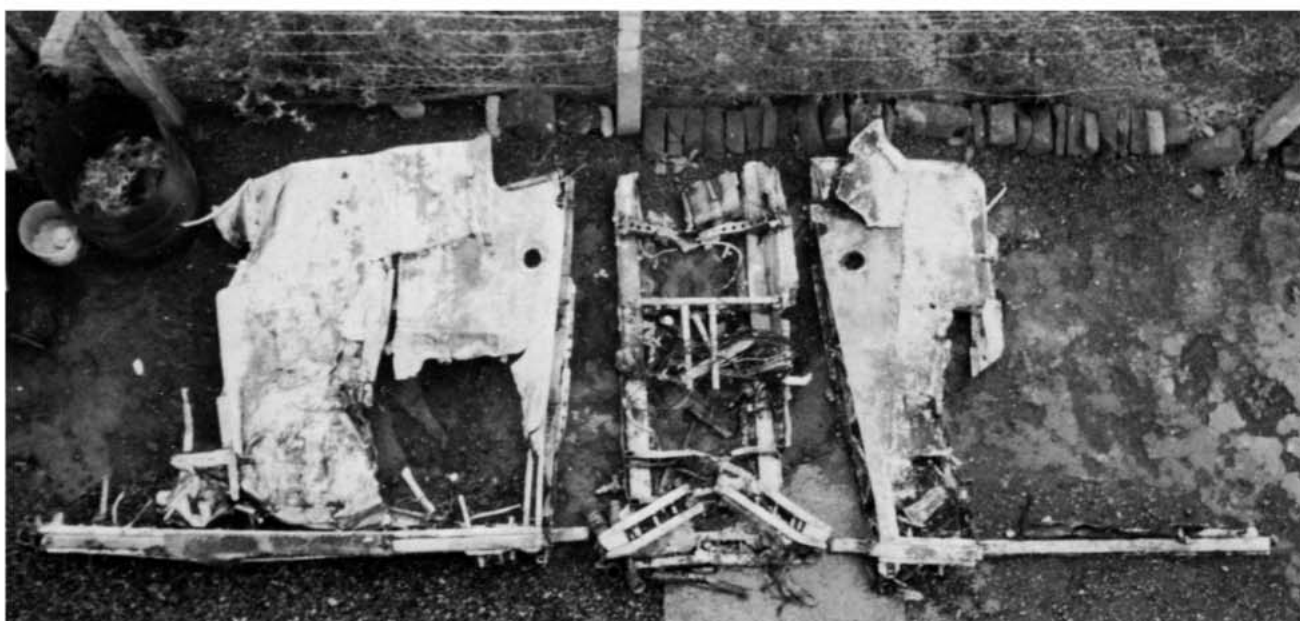


sent to the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre at RAF Bampton, but unfortunately there was no image on the film when it was developed.

On that Saturday, everyone who had been involved in the search and recovery of *Blue Peter* gathered round the memorial rock on Dugland Hill for a short service of dedication. The elderly witnesses, who had been

such a help, could not make the long walk through the valley to the memorial itself, so it had been arranged that they would be able to watch the flypast from a vantage point on a track which ran around the side of nearby

Greenhill, some 1,500 feet above sea level on the south side of the valley, and about three miles from the memorial. Also present at that spot was David Hunter Blair's brother, James.



The wings and cockpit section were assembled and photographed from the roof of the museum building.



David's cousin, Frank Hunter Blair, was with us to represent the family. At 1 p.m., I gave a short speech followed by the reading of the poem *For Johnny*. This was followed by a lament by a lone piper and a minute's silence, shattered a few moments later by the

arrival of the two Mk 19 Spitfires from the Memorial Flight. The emotions of the people gathered can be imagined: a mixture of elation, joy, and tears, that once again there were Spitfires over Cairnsmore of Carsphairn.

A 2¼-hour amateur video with additional soundtrack and full narration covering the search for and discovery/recovery of Blue Peter is available direct from Ralph Davidson, 85 Keal Avenue, Blairdardie, Glasgow G15 6PA. Price £10.00 plus £2.00 postage.





HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Fifty years ago the Pacific area underwent a cataclysmic experience: the outbreak of the Pacific War and three years of bitter fighting on both sides changed the political and social situation in the Pacific for ever, heralding the end of the Colonial period. However cataclysmic the event, the perceptions of it and the perceptions of its physical heritage in form of remains and sites, varies widely, depending on the point of view. While there are always two views in a military conflict, those of the two opposing combatants and their respective allies, there is a third one to be added in the Pacific area: that of the local communities.

With the 50th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and all the media debate and public attention it attracted now some three years behind us, it is time to take stock of the impact this attack and the subsequent four years of warfare had on some parts of the Pacific.

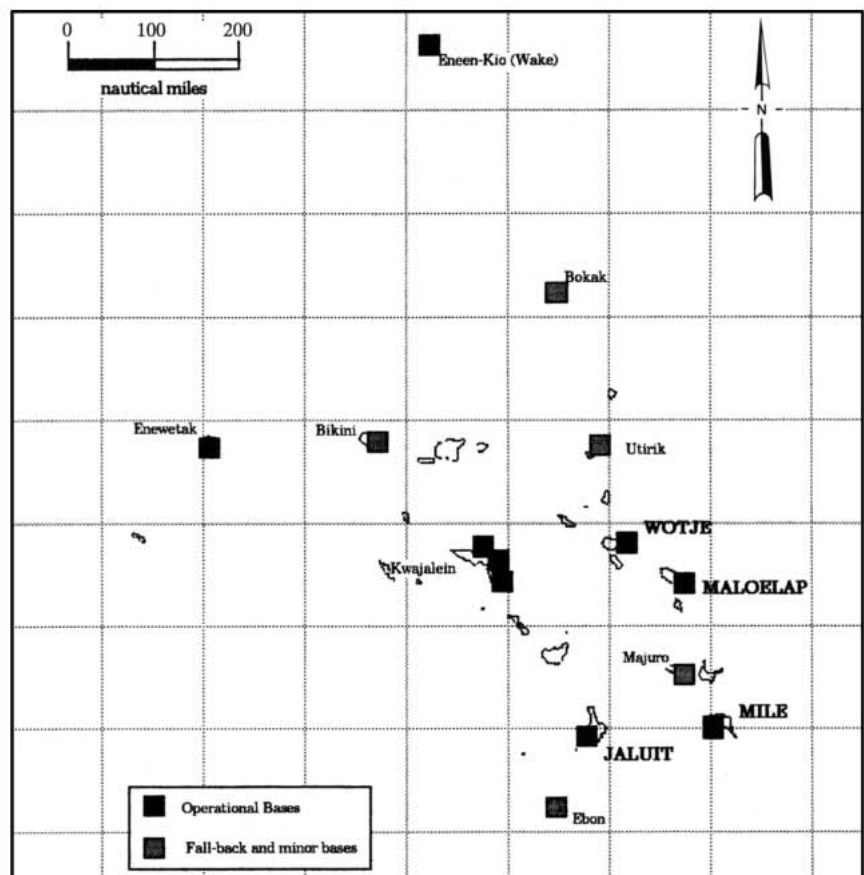
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

The Marshall Islands, comprising 29 atolls and 5 islands, are located in the north-west equatorial Pacific, about 2,400 miles west of Honolulu, about 1,700 miles north of Fiji and 950 miles east of Pohnpei. The atolls of the Marshall Islands, comprising well over 1,200 islands and islets, are scattered about in an ocean area of well over 600,000 square miles. The combined ocean area encompassed in the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone is well over 1.5 million square miles. By contrast, the total enclosed lagoonal area of the 28 atolls is only slightly more than 4,500 square miles, while the total combined land area of the atolls is as little as 70 square miles.

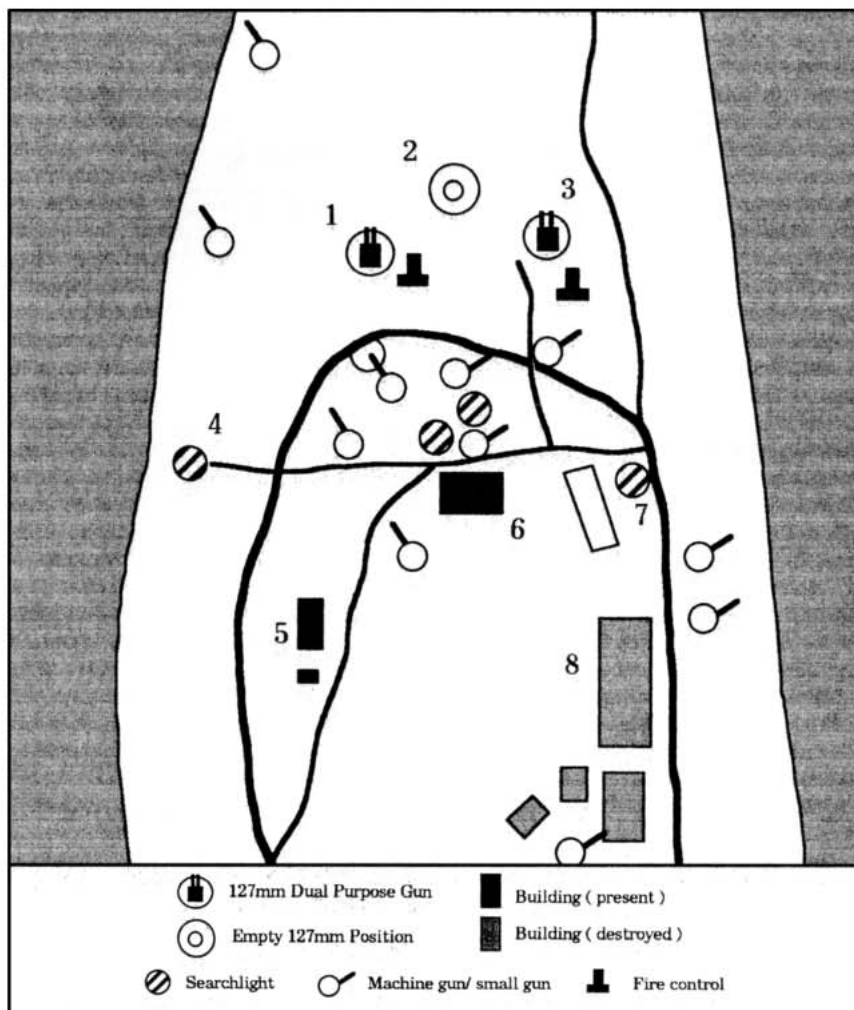
With the exception of the two north-western atolls, Enewetak and Ujelang, the Marshall Islands are arranged in two island chains running roughly NNW to SSE: the western Ralik Chain and the eastern Ratak Chain. Not counting the five islands of Jemo, Jabwat, Kili, Lib and Mejit, the atolls which comprise the Marshalls range from very small — just over a square mile — to very large. With a lagoonal area of over 800

square miles, Kwajalein has the distinction of being the atoll with the world's largest lagoon.

By Dirk H. R. Spennemann



Top: Six-inch coastal defence gun on its original location on Mile Island. The gun was manufactured in 1905 by the Elswick Ordnance Company in the UK for a Japanese warship. After the ship had been scrapped following the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty of 1922, the gun was kept mothballed and was finally emplaced at the eastern perimeter of the Japanese Mandated Territory of Micronesia.



Mile Island lies at the southern end of the island chain. This schematic shows the northern 127mm dual-purpose gun position. [1] Western emplacement with gun. [2] Empty emplacement. [3] Eastern gun with gun director. [4] Western 100cm searchlight. [5] Power station. [6] Command bunker. [7] Eastern 100cm searchlight. [8] Barracks for gun crews.

but that damage forms part of the historical context in which these sites need to be interpreted. The US forces commonly dumped all excess supply when the bases were folded up, thus creating enormous archaeological sites, often accessible to divers.

In modern terms, this means that these islands abound with war remains, ranging from runways, taxiways, hangars, aircraft revetments and other parts of the air installations to docks, piers, and seaplane ramps. There are gun positions for coastal defence guns, anti-aircraft batteries and dual-purpose guns, personnel shelters, ammunition magazines, bunkers, blockhouses, command centres, remains of barracks buildings, mess halls, Quonset huts and the like. The infrastructure consisted, among other things, of water storage tanks and collection systems, repair shops, power stations, radio stations, hospital facilities, laundry units and sewerage facilities.

Even with an abundance of war material from both Allies and Japanese having been removed after the cessation of hostilities, the inventory is still very impressive: it includes shipwrecks, aircraft wrecks, tanks, vehicles, railroad engines and rolling stock, as well as searchlights, light and heavy guns, and an abundance of unexploded ammunition. Aspects of after-hours life are also represented in the form of sake and beer bottles and the like. In short, the remains of these bases comprise all aspects of military life and present them in a complete manner and as such represent time capsules.

Battlefields were left littered with burned-out tanks and vehicles, scattered small arms and ammunition; even the orderly US withdrawal from temporary bases after the Japanese surrender left behind a great number of remains, not to mention the rubbish dumps. The concentration of such remains in Micronesia had been so great that the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Eneen-ko had attained the nickname of 'Rust Territory'.

JAPANESE BASES IN THE MARSHALLS

Following World War I, Japan was given the former German possessions north of the Equator for administration as a mandate of the League of Nations. Japan began restricting the movements of foreigners in the area, which created suspicions of untoward activities violating the covenant of the mandate. In the 1930s, the world watched with ever-increasing unease the real and the perceived developments in the Mandated Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia), especially following Japan's refusal to sign the continuation of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty on Naval Tonnage in 1935 and their departure from the League of Nations a year later. Japan was feared to develop strategic strongholds and the military infrastructure on various — if not most — of the islands, a fear fuelled by the secrecy with which she shrouded the mandated territory. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan used bases in the islands for a swift and wide-ranging attack on Allied shipping and insular possessions such as Guam, Wake Island and Kiribati (then the Gilbert Islands). Substantial development occurred in Palau, Chuuk, as well as on a host of other locations. The eastern perimeter was also heavily fortified with naval and air bases centred on Kwajalein, Maloelap and Wotje.

While most of the US bases as well as those in the Japanese-conquered areas were of a temporary nature only, the Japanese bases in Micronesia had been built as permanent installations with elaborate concrete structures and a well-designed infrastructure. The impact of the American offensive left many of these bases bypassed by the US forces, cut off from supplies and 'left to wither on the vine', with thousands of Japanese soldiers dying of starvation.

HISTORICAL SITES

Most, if not all, of the Japanese military installations were destroyed from a military point of view by the often daily bombing runs, but much of the substance of the buildings and gun emplacements still remain. From the perspective of historic preservation, these sites are damaged, as far as their pre-World War II appearance is concerned,



The Japanese 127mm Type 96 (1936) served in both anti-aircraft and coastal defence rôles, hence the term 'dual-purpose'. These guns, emplaced in groups of two, with a third emplacement to spare, are the most common guns to be found today on the Japanese bases in the Marshall Islands.



Human habitation poses increasing threats to the World War II heritage as the population of the Marshall Islands increases. Where they still stand undamaged, any Japanese concrete structures are sought after locations, such as the concrete foundation of the power station.

THE MARSHALL ISLANDS' PROGRAMME

The Republic of the Marshall Islands Historic Preservation Office has undertaken to document and manage the World War II heritage of that country, and the local government has established an international carrier, AIR Marshall Islands, operating a DC-8 aircraft, to be used as a major tool to increase tourism. The market aimed at will be speciality tourism, mainly geared towards divers and those interested in the history of World War II.

As for any other country, the archaeological heritage of the Marshall Islands has some aspects, which, if wisely managed, can be of major economic importance to the country. This is even more the case since tourism is currently promoted as one of the major income-earning industries. During World War II, the Marshall Islands played a major rôle in the Japanese defence system of Micronesia, and a vital part in the US advance to Japan. Four of the seven Japanese bases were bypassed during the US attacks and, today, form first-rate open-air museums. All told, each of the four bases is probably better preserved than any World War II site in Europe. The preservation and variety of installations available on the four bases is such, that each individually forms a major historical resource.

It has already been shown elsewhere that archaeological sites, if well managed, can be used as tourism attractions and can provide economic benefits both on the national, and — more importantly — on the local island level.

THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION NEEDS

In the foreseeable future several or most of the resources dating to World War II are threatened by a number of factors: (i) environmental deterioration (e.g. decay), infestation by animals and destruction (e.g. shoreline retreat); (ii) urban development, e.g. house construction, settlement expansion and installation of utilities; (iii) artefact removal and site destruction for capital gain (e.g. scrap-metal dealers and artefact collectors) and by souvenir hunters; (iv) visitor pressure from increased visits of tourists and locals alike; and finally (v) unwise local management decisions, such as ground clearing by burning.

Moreover, these sites are, in the eyes of most people, not worth protecting, and thus fare worse than sites considered worth keeping. Vandalism, scrap-metal collection and clean-ups are not necessarily issues of the past. These threats are still present and can impair a resource rapidly. On top of this threat, we have to understand the dynamics of the 50th anniversary of the Pacific War and the added number of visitors and persons looking for keepsakes.

THE PROGRAMME

The Historic Preservation Office of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, with financial support by the Department of the Interior, Office of Territorial and Insular Affairs, has begun a programme to take stock of the existent resources, ranging from complete air bases replete with aircraft wrecks, gun emplacements with guns installed, concrete installations, personnel

shelters, bunkers, support structures including vehicles and the like. The lagoons of several atolls are littered with wrecks of ships and aircraft, or with war surplus material discarded by the US forces after the Japanese surrender. Majuro Lagoon, for example, sports a huge graveyard of US military vehicles.

The programme, which will cover the atolls of Jaluit, Mile, Maloelap (see *After the Battle* No. 54) and Wotje, all locations of major Japanese bases, focuses on surveying the existing World War II sites, which will be mapped, inventoried, described and documented.

Based on these surveys, management plans for the resources will be drawn up to determine the needs and directions of future management and preservation efforts. Ultimately, tourism management and development plans will be prepared for each atoll to ensure that the visitors will not cause more detriment to what remains.

WORK PROGRAMME

The anticipated work programme for the two-year project by the Historic Preservation Office will encompass the following work:

(1) Review of the written history relating to the period of World War II contained in the documents of the US National Archives in Washington;

(2) Detailed archaeological survey, including location, mapping, description, plan and photographic recording of four Japanese military bases;

(3) Recording of the oral history relating to the period of World War II (in conjunction with a local historian);

(4) Provision of inventory reports, archaeological resource management plans and tourism development reports for each individual site;

(5) Implementation procedures for the archaeological resource management plans and on-site training of the local governments involved.

FUNDING

The funding for the programme comes from a technical assistance grant by the US Department of the Interior, Office of Territorial and Insular Affairs and from an appropriation of the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Additional funding, mainly in-kind donations by local companies.



A Grumman TBF 'Avenger' torpedo bomber on the bottom of Majuro Lagoon, north of Mile Island. A large number of aircraft and shipwrecks lie on the bottom of the lagoons in the Marshall Islands, accessible to scuba divers.



THE BATTLE FOR MERKSEM

By Achiel Rely

For the people of Merksem, the liberation of Antwerp on September 4, 1944 turned into a great disappointment. After the news had spread to this northern suburb that British tanks and troops had entered the city just a short distance away, the inhabitants waited impatiently with flowers in their hands to greet the first of the liberators they had expected for so long. Belgian and Allied flags which had been stowed away in drawers for more than four years could at last be displayed. Most shop windows were hastily trimmed with Union Jacks or posters welcoming the liberators. But while the population of Antwerp went wild with joy, nothing of the kind happened in Merksem.

Here, they were waiting at their porches or chatting in groups on the pavements, from time to time gazing in anticipation in the direction of Antwerp. The long stream of retreating Germans in all kinds of vehicles making their way along Bredabaan, the main road to Holland, had vanished. The last tramcars entering Merksem from the north went into one or other of Merksem's two depots. At 6 p.m., the suburb was empty of vehicles and there was little going on except for a few snipers firing sporadically from behind windows or from roofs at the stragglers hastening through the streets, trying to catch up with their units. Disappointed, most people went to bed, convinced that they would greet their liberators the following day.

The Belgian Resistance were meanwhile playing a crucial rôle in securing the Antwerp docks. As the British armour raced across northern France, the message 'Pour Francoise la lune est claire' broadcast by the BBC on September 1, 2 and 3 had signified

the final alert for the Resistance groups, which numbered altogether some 3,500 members, in and around Antwerp. They had moved into action to help the Shermans of the 11th Armoured Division enter the city, and to seize key points and flush out and harry the occupation forces. Obviously, of vital importance to their efforts were the docks — the vast facilities, capable of handling thousands of tons of supplies a day, which were a major objective for the Allies

to secure as a base. The first few British tanks arrived at the south-east corner of the sprawling dock area in the late afternoon.

The commander of the Resistance fighting here wanted the tanks to push on further into the docks . . . and his eyes were also fixed on the bridges over the Albert Canal into Merksem.



Grand Place, Antwerp, September 4, 1944. Liberation comes at last to Belgium's main city port whose capture was vital to sustain the Allied drive into Germany.



Across the canal, beyond Merksem and the bend in the River Scheldt (Schelde in Flemish, Escaut in French) in which the docks lay, stretched 60 miles of polder to the sea. Whoever controlled the Scheldt estuary controlled the port of Antwerp. In the weeks and months that followed, as the Allies' need for the use of Antwerp grew ever more pressing for the continuance of the European campaign, the course of Allied strategy after the arrival of the tanks at the docks was to give rise to one of the great controversies of the war. Right or wrong, in those heady days of early September, in the pursuit of retreating German forces, all energies were directed towards advancing to the Rhine and into Germany itself.

Merksem, straddling the canal and forming the eastern boundary of the port, was seen by the Resistance as an essential element of their operational planning. Merksem's power station produced the electricity required to operate many of the port installations. Capture of the bridges and the suburb would open up a northern route from Antwerp into Holland for the Allies; if the Germans retained control of the bridges and continued to occupy Merksem, the port would be vulnerable to attack from the flank, and it was likely that they would exploit the

Yet, while the city centre was alive with joy — these boys are being given the treat of a lifetime on Groenplaats — a couple of miles away to the north the people in the suburb of Merksem (Merxem) waited in vain for the arrival of the tanks. Today the Hilton Hotel stands in the background.

canal for defensive purposes. The lifting bridges therefore had to be captured in the down position and kept that way to get the British across the canal.

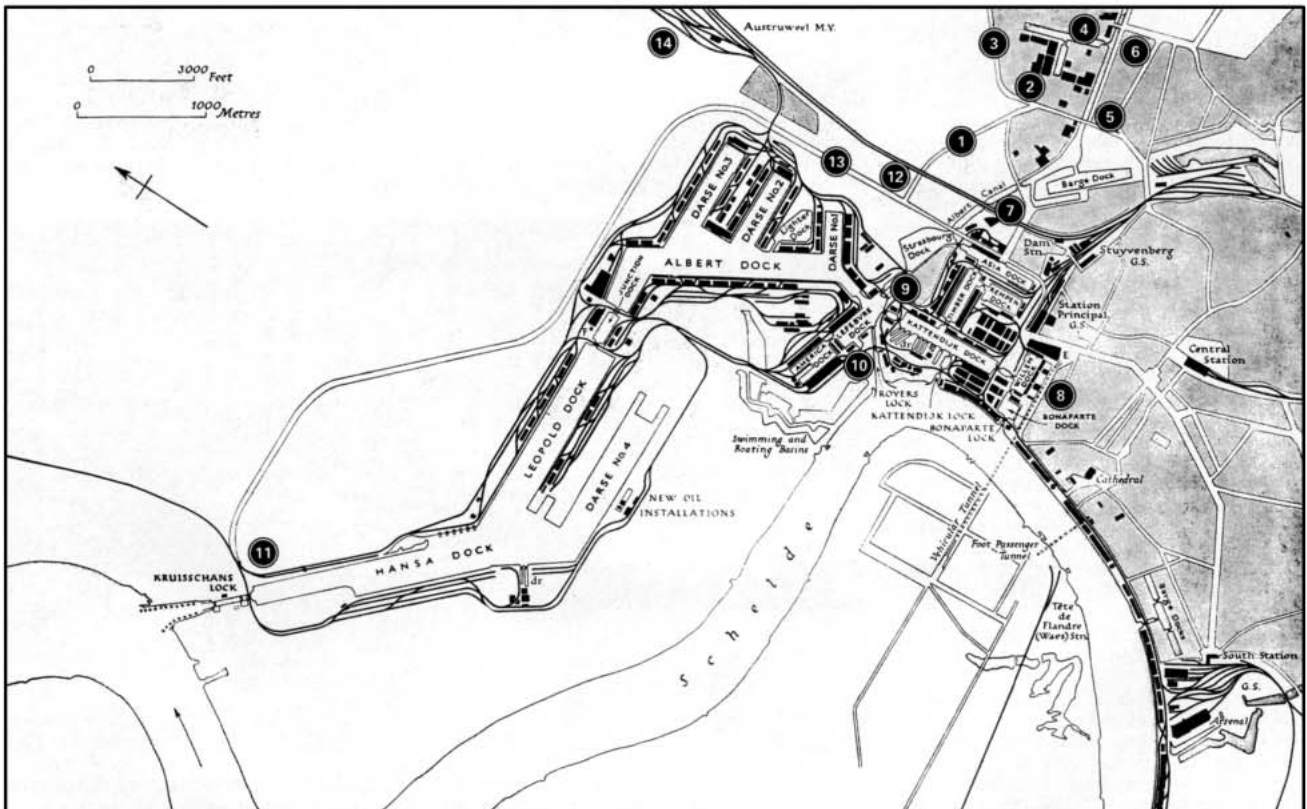
At that very moment, the Germans were in the process of forming a defensive line, making use of the Albert Canal, running due east through Merksem, as one of the measures which it was hoped would arrest, or at any rate delay, the Allies' progress and allow them to reorganise. To fill it out, an outstanding officer, Generaloberst Kurt Chill, had commandeered a motley collection of troops in full retreat.

On the evening of the 4th, a number of Resistance men crouched on the nearside of a bascule bridge on the main road (Groenendaallaan) leading straight from the docks into Merksem and passing underneath a steel railway bridge. Two lifting bridges over the

canal had been secured in the down position and, twice in the early hours of the second day (September 5), several Resistance fighters had advanced in the direction of the suburb but had to retreat because of heavy fire coming from behind the railway embankment. The Resistance possessed only small arms and, consequently, had no option but to withdraw and wait for the arrival of British armoured troops to deal with the 88mm on the opposite side. Helplessly, the frustrated patriots waited for reinforcements as one bridge on the east side of the main dock was finally blown by the Germans.

The Belgians urged an immediate assault on Merksem, but the British seemed to have no specific orders to move north of Antwerp to secure the bridges over the canal. They would not listen to the arguments of the men who knew every stone of the dock area and

[1] Groenendaallaan. [2] Sint Bartholomeus Church. [3] Bredabaan. [4] Power Station. [5] Schijnpoort Bridge. [6] Deurne Bridge. [7] IJzer Bridge. [8] Tunnel entrance. [9] Dry dock. [10] Royers Lock. [11] Kruisschans Lock. [12] Railway embankment and bridge over Groenendaallaan. [13] Noorderlaan. [14] Marshalling yards.





every possible way of entering Merksem. For the British, the docks had been secured — or so they believed — and further advance was out of the question. Orders arrived for the tanks to rest and refit for 48 hours and, reluctantly, the Resistance pulled back.

Along the canal, a team of volunteers had managed to reach the far bank and had joined the workforce in the power station to secure its operation. Meanwhile, other patriots had been fighting throughout the night in the docks, where they had neutralised an ammunition barge, *Goro*, loaded with dynamite and mines which the Germans intended to use for demolition, and had pushed northwards to extend their grip on

Above: This is the Zuiderterras — the southern terrace — a promenade along the bank of the River Scheldt. It was a dangerous vantage point as snipers were active on the far bank. Below: The present-day comparison shows the post-war development along the Noorderterras in Sint Anneke.

the area. Resistance fighters of the University Platoon, assisted by British troops, tried to get across the IJzer (Yser) Bridge (a fixed bridge not far from the bascule bridge at Groenendaallaan), but found it swept by accurate fire, and at 1.30 p.m. the Germans blew this bridge too. Although there was still a possibility of the British securing a bridgehead across the canal a few miles east of Merksem where a Resistance group had seized the Deurne Bridge at Wijnegem on

the night of the 4th, nobody seemed to want to know. The last German bridgehead on the south bank was located in the nearby vinegar factory, from where a road to Merksem sloped towards the Deurne Bridge. This stronghold was to prevent every British attempt to advance to Merksem or to the bridge while the Resistance still held it. The Deurne Bridge was blown up by the Germans on the 5th, and their stronghold capitulated on the 7th.





Bredabaan is the main road through Merksem. It saw some of the heaviest fighting during the latter part of September. The church in the right background is that of Sint Franciscus.

Another important fixed bridge led from Schijnpoot across the Albert Canal to the heart of Merksem. At about 8 p.m. on the 5th, orders were at last issued for the 4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry to cross the canal via this bridge, but as they advanced it was blown up in their faces. By then, the Germans had also opened the floodgates, submerging large areas of low-lying land in the northern suburbs.

Against now-stiffening opposition, the Shropshires' task was not made any easier by not having any decent maps of the area — the unexpected speed of the advance from the Seine having literally run the British units right off the map. There was also a reluctance to consult the Resistance, who could have led them to the weakest defended positions. A common misnomer for all Belgian Resistance groups was the popular name 'Witte Brigade' (White Brigade) in contrast to the collaborating 'Zwarte Brigade' (Black Brigade, clad in black uniforms). In reality, the Resistance comprised a range of national movements and political groupings and most patriots fighting in the dock area and at Merksem belonged to the NKB, a Royalist movement in support of King Leopold III. (In 1940, the Belgian government-in-exile in London had disapproved of the King's decision to surrender with his army after 18 days' heavy fighting against overwhelming odds and, in due course, his decision to remain in occupied Belgium to be with his people, instead of joining his government in England, gave rise to insinuations which, after the liberation, led to a plebiscite and to his eventual abdication.)

Attempting to secure a lodgement so that the divisional engineers could erect a bridge for armour and anti-tank guns, the KSLI encountered increasing problems. Few assault boats were available and the first attempt to cross had to be aborted when they came under heavy fire from German strong-points in factories and from fortified positions on the north bank. A second location was found and, by first light on the 6th, three companies were across, establishing a small foothold. The locality they found themselves in was a mass of factories, a tangle of small streets and alleys. In the half-light, it was hard to sort out friend from foe or which was the best way to go. Under heavy attack and being shot up by tanks, they were isolated in a couple of factories, holding out all the following day until sappers came across to

ferry the survivors back under cover of darkness and an artillery barrage.

Meanwhile, two companies of the 3rd Monmouthshires, supported by a few tanks of the 23rd Hussars, had been ordered into Merksem from the dock area to help take the pressure off the KSLI. They were stopped by German infantry about 300 yards along Groenendaallaan. All four companies of the Monmouths mounted an attack at 3 a.m. on the 6th. In pitch darkness and pouring rain, some of the leading infantry reached just beyond the railway, there to spend an unpleasant day until able to pull back after dark as part of a general withdrawal of both the KSLI and the Monmouths. The failure of these attempts came as the 11th Armoured Division was switched to the east in the British drive for the Rhine which was shortly to evolve into the Arnhem operation, the 53rd (Welsh) Division taking over the defence of Antwerp before the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division began arriving on

September 16 to play its part in the defence of the port and the Canadian Army's operations to obtain the use of it by breaking the Germans' hold on the Scheldt estuary.

In the port area, the continuing Resistance campaign centred on the struggle to secure control of Kruisschans Lock, the entrance to which controlled the water level of the entire dock complex. Having occupied trenches covering the lock during the early stages of the battle, they were now fighting alongside Allied soldiers in a bitter struggle to gain the upper hand. Patrolling activity was kept up, and sorties made behind German lines, but it was to the new arrivals — the Canadians — that the Resistance looked in anticipation of co-operating with them to clear the Germans out. These were: from Groenendaallaan Bridge to just south of the village of Oorderen, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry; overlooking Merksem and Eekeren, the Essex Scottish Regiment; and east of them, the Royal Regiment of Canada.



The only way one can take a comparison like this is early on a Sunday morning. In the background is the Oude Barreellei where the author and his family lived at the time until advised by German troops to clear the area.



Essential services to Merksem — water, gas and electricity — were all cut during the battle. The water fountain was removed and reinstated by the side of Sint Bartholomeus Church in 1955.



Antwerp had become a strange place in September 1944. Excellent observation posts from high buildings meant that ample warning could be given of any approaching forces, and it was possible for troops on leave to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of the city. The Canadian 4th Infantry Brigade found the people of Antwerp going about their daily business as if the war was far away. The aura of liberation had yet to wear off, and the people remained in festive mood, almost oblivious to the continued presence of the Germans still holding out in the northern suburbs of the city, despite frequent deaths caused by shelling. It was all a pleasant surprise for the Canadians after fighting their way across France from Normandy. Shops, cafés, night-clubs, theatres and cinemas were all open. The pavements were crowded with attractive shoppers; the girls were friendly. Who could ask for anything more in wartime?

It was a very different picture over in Merksem and the villages surrounding the docks. Electricity in the suburb had been cut and all telephone communications with the city were interrupted. The ray of hope of being liberated had soon started to fade and out came the stable lamps and candles. Those who lacked such luxuries just went to bed early. The advance of the Allies, so rapid in early September, now ground to a halt, and for the people of Merksem the worst was about to begin.

Some 35 members of the workforce who had kept the power station going had now been joined by the Resistance. On the 6th, German tanks arrived from the north, entering Merksem via Deuzeldstraat. Angrily, a platoon of SS troops entered the premises and began searching for members of the Resistance, and they drove 21 people outside, where they were shot one by one. The more fortunate found hiding places that saved them from certain death, to emerge exhausted two or three nights later.

A general evacuation order was issued by the Germans on the 7th. Many people refused to leave their homes, still hoping it would not be long before the Allies drove the Germans out; above all, they did not want to see their property stolen or damaged. Some 2,000 people sought shelter locally in large cellars, beneath factories, flour mills, schools and cinemas. The National Work for Welfare and Red Cross volunteers performed miracles in supplying food and medicine. Some people, however, were forced to leave their homes, especially those living in streets close to the canal and in the neighbourhood of Sint Bartholomeus Church, and the 't Dokske, Deuzel and Oude Barrelelei areas. Thousands fled in the direction of Schoten, Brasschaat or Kapellen. Of those who remained and were killed, most had left the protection of the cellars to look for food or get some fresh air.

The local Sint Bartholomeus Hospital was crammed with casualties and, since the dead could not be buried in the municipal cemetery, they were interred in the hospital gardens. (After the war, 104 bodies had to be exhumed and reburied.) Several wards lost their windows as a result of blast, and patients had to be evacuated and the elderly were transferred to the cellar of a nearby bakery for safety. The tax collection offices in Van Heybeekstraat were also taken over as an emergency hospital. (Dr Maurice Timmermanns, who toiled unceasingly for the well-being of his patients and the good of all, had a street named in his honour after the war.)

Food and medicine were the two major problems, and supplies were running alarmingly low so, on September 14, Dr Timmermanns and a few of the townspeople went to Calixberghe Castle, some five kilometres away at Schoten, where the German



On September 6, SS troops arrived at the power station and rounded up 21 of the workers whom they suspected were in league with the Resistance. They were marched outside, lined up and shot: this memorial, erected in 1945 on the spot in Straalstraat at Deuzel stands to their memory.

commanding officer, Major Schilling, had his command post. He authorised safe passage between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. within the triangle bordered by Houthulststraat, Terlindenhofstraat and Sint Bartholomeus Church, which helped the evacuation of the injured and the search for supplies of food.

Schoten and 's-Gravenwezel were liberated by advancing Canadians, but in Merksem the situation took a dramatic turn for the worse when, on September 24, the Germans started to lay mines in several streets, including Van Aertselaarstraat where Sint Bartholomeus Hospital was situated. Without hesitation, Dr Timmermans once more set out to see Major Schilling, who agreed to halt the minelaying on one condition — that the population dig anti-tank ditches. For the hospital's sake, the doctor agreed and, with rain pouring down and shells whistling overhead, the inhabitants of the threatened streets braved the danger and began digging for all they were worth in order to save their homes and the hospital.

The town hall was hit on the 29th and gutted by fire, the adjacent police station also being burned out. Looting had broken out in the port area of Merksem on the 30th, food and cigarettes obviously being highly-sought-after commodities, but it transcended petty thieving when some of the looters went for more expensive items. Of the several factories and warehouses that were broken into, one that suffered particularly badly at the hands of the looters was the De Welvaart provisions warehouse. Several looters were killed or injured in an incident when a crate of sugar fell on a landmine.

On October 2, orders were issued at 9 a.m. to occupy Merksem with all available men of the Resistance — about 700 men altogether of the various groups. At 1.15 p.m., their leader managed to row across the Albert Canal and reached the bridgehead already held by about 80 Canadians. Just over two hours later, some 200 men had crossed over, but heavy artillery fire temporarily halted the operation. Several Resistance members had been killed by accurate enemy fire, but those who had reached the north bank occupied the Griffin plant and the power station. At 5 a.m. next morning, the remaining patriots on the south bank were able to cross in style over a footbridge which had been constructed during the night. At 8 a.m., three sections were attacking on a line Grootdok-Delarbrelaan and, within three hours, had attained their objective.



The burned out Town Hall next to the police station on Bredabaan. It was demolished and rebuilt on another site nearby in 1968.



Left: Sint Bartholomeus was severely damaged by Allied shelling and the destruction completed when it was hit by a V-weapon on December 30, 1944. Right: It was rebuilt and inaugurated in 1950.





Meanwhile, a platoon of Canadians advanced via Salvialei and reached Oude Barreel on the eastern edge of Merksem. Canadian tanks had crossed the only surviving bridge at Groenendaallaan and entered Merksem from the west. Severe fighting took place in the neighbourhood of Sint Bartholomeus Church, causing many casualties among both troops and civilians. The church was strongly defended by some 50 Germans who were finally forced to surrender to the encircling Canadians and Belgians. On Tuesday, October 3, an increasing number of Canadians with tanks appeared on Bredabaan. Except for odd skirmishes, mostly around bunkers in the surrounding polders, Merksem was finally free. However, the cost was high, for this one suburb suffered over 200 residents killed and 460

Above: And down come the trappings of the occupation on the Feldkommandantur at the Belgiëlei . . .

injured. About 200 houses had been destroyed or were unfit for habitation, and 400 or so had been badly damaged.

The joy of liberation was not to last for long. On October 13, the very day the funeral ceremony took place for the 21 victims slaughtered at the power station, an enormous bang was heard: the first V-weapon had struck Antwerp, heralding the start of another period of death and destruction (see *After the Battle* No. 57). The first V1 to fall on Merksem exploded at Laarsebaan on October 31, followed almost immediately by one at IJskelder, a quarter near the Albert Canal which had suffered much during the battle.

The last V-weapon to hit Merksem exploded on March 19, 1945 and, all told, a total of 94 V1s or V2s came down in the municipality during those five months, killing 125 people and injuring 608. From September 4, 1944 (now celebrated as Liberation Day in Antwerp), until March 19, 1945, some 325 Merksem inhabitants were killed and more than a thousand injured. Out of 5,890 houses, 280 were completely destroyed and 1,662 badly damaged; another 2,666 suffered minor damage. Destroyed for ever were the town hall, the historic Melgeshof and the boys' school in Van Heybeekstraat (where I went to school as a lad) and the church of Sint Bartholomeus.



. . . and at the railway station. The German victory slogan read 'Het Duitsche V-Zegeteeken' ('The German V for Victory sign') yet, for the people of Merksem, the end of the battle on October 3 gave but a brief respite before the start of the next.



Ten days later, the letter 'V' meant something quite different as the first of Hitler's Vengeance weapons struck the city. Nearly 6,000 V1s and V2s had landed in the Province of Antwerp by the war's end.

